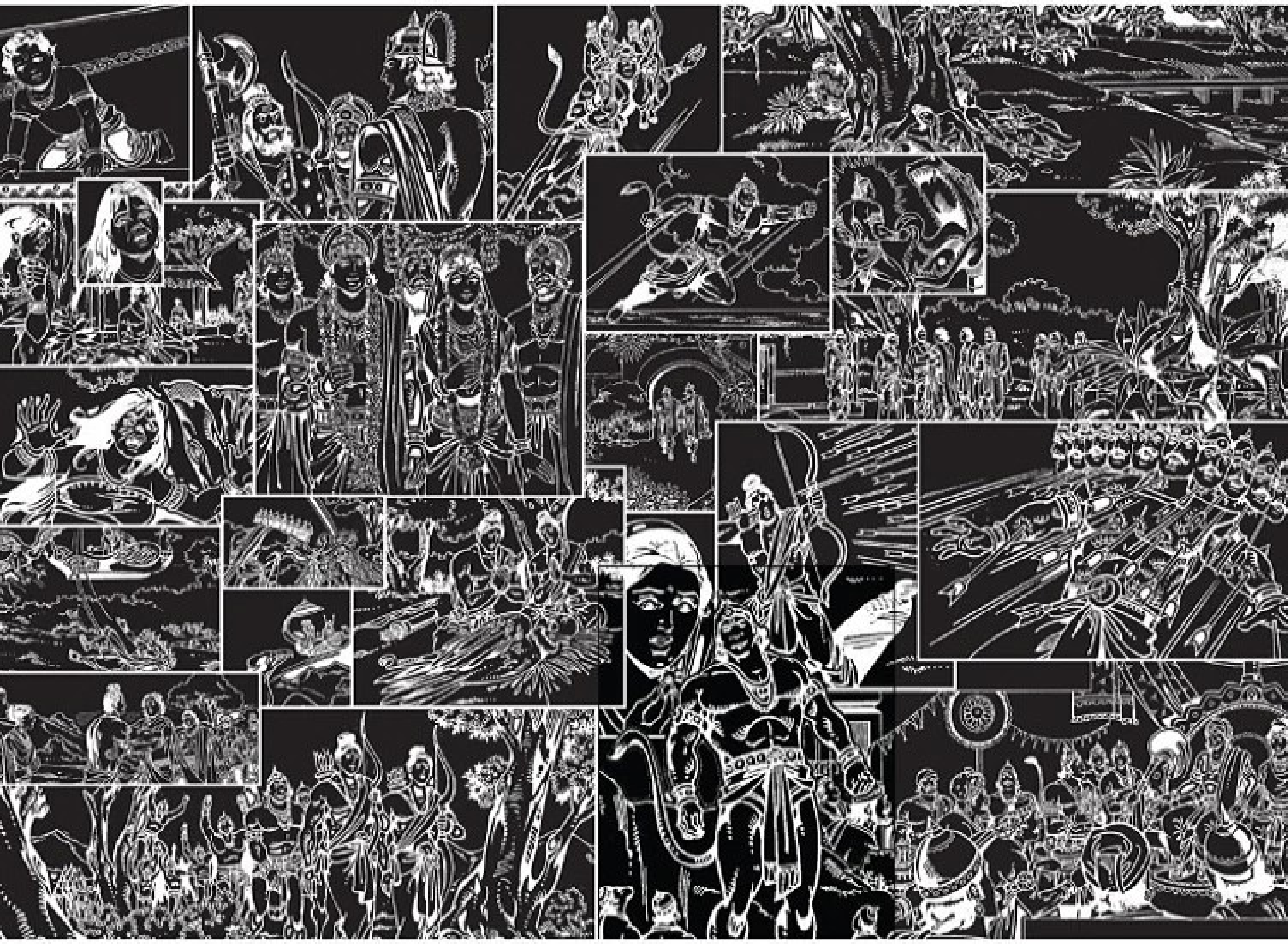
SPECIAL ISSUE

AMAR CHITRA KATHA

TULSIDAS' RAMAYANA

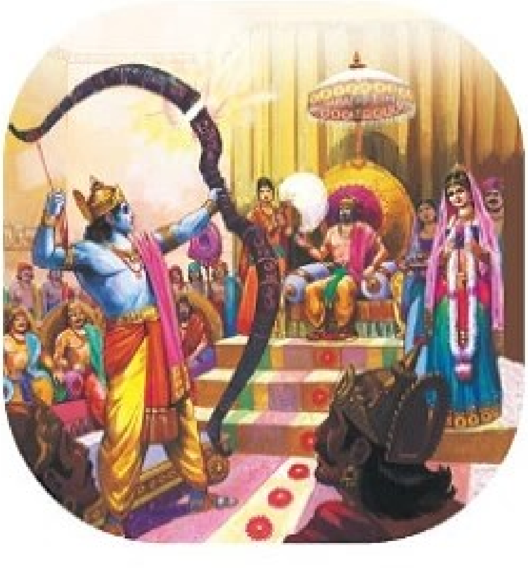
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TULSIDAS' RAMAYANA

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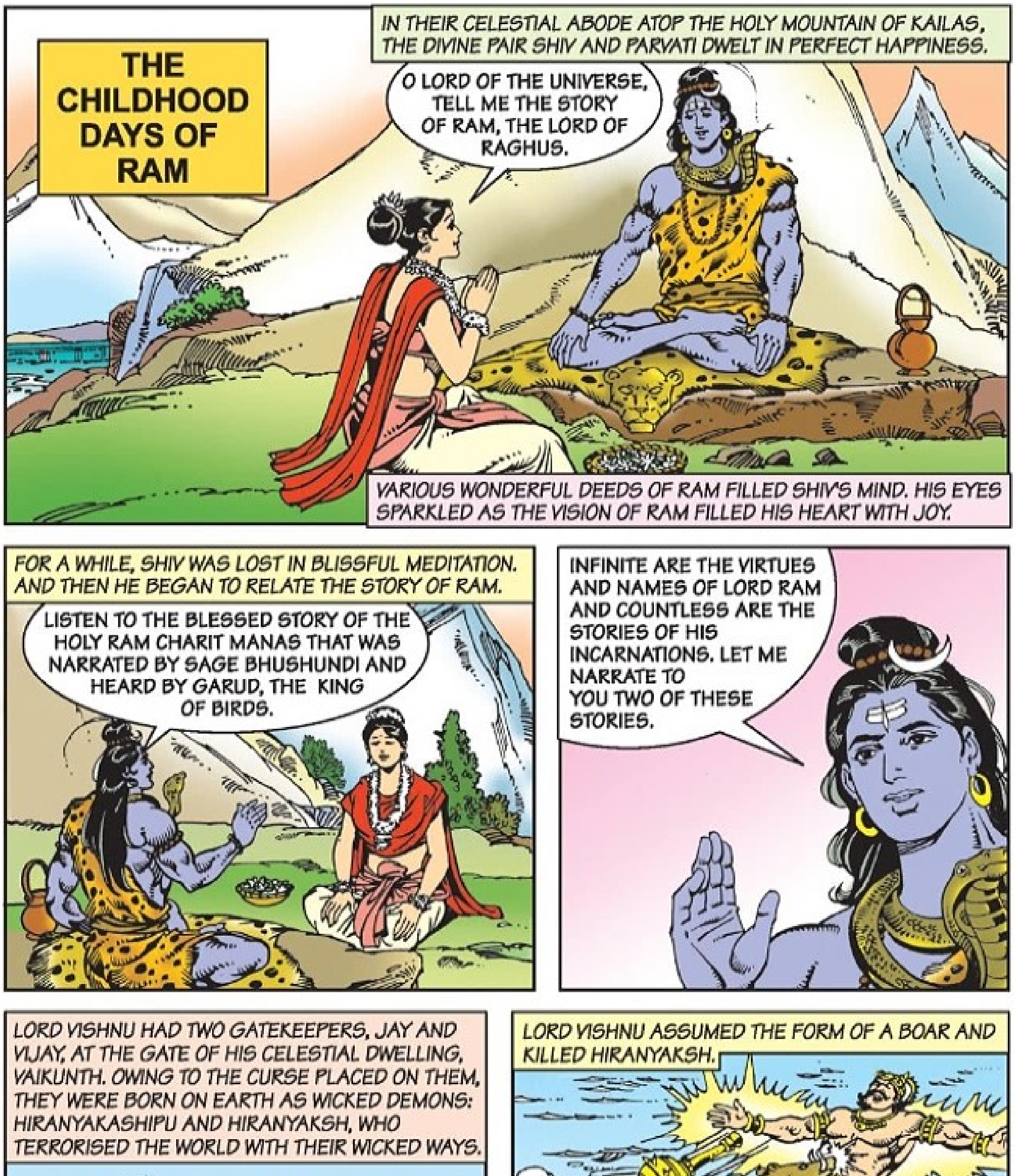
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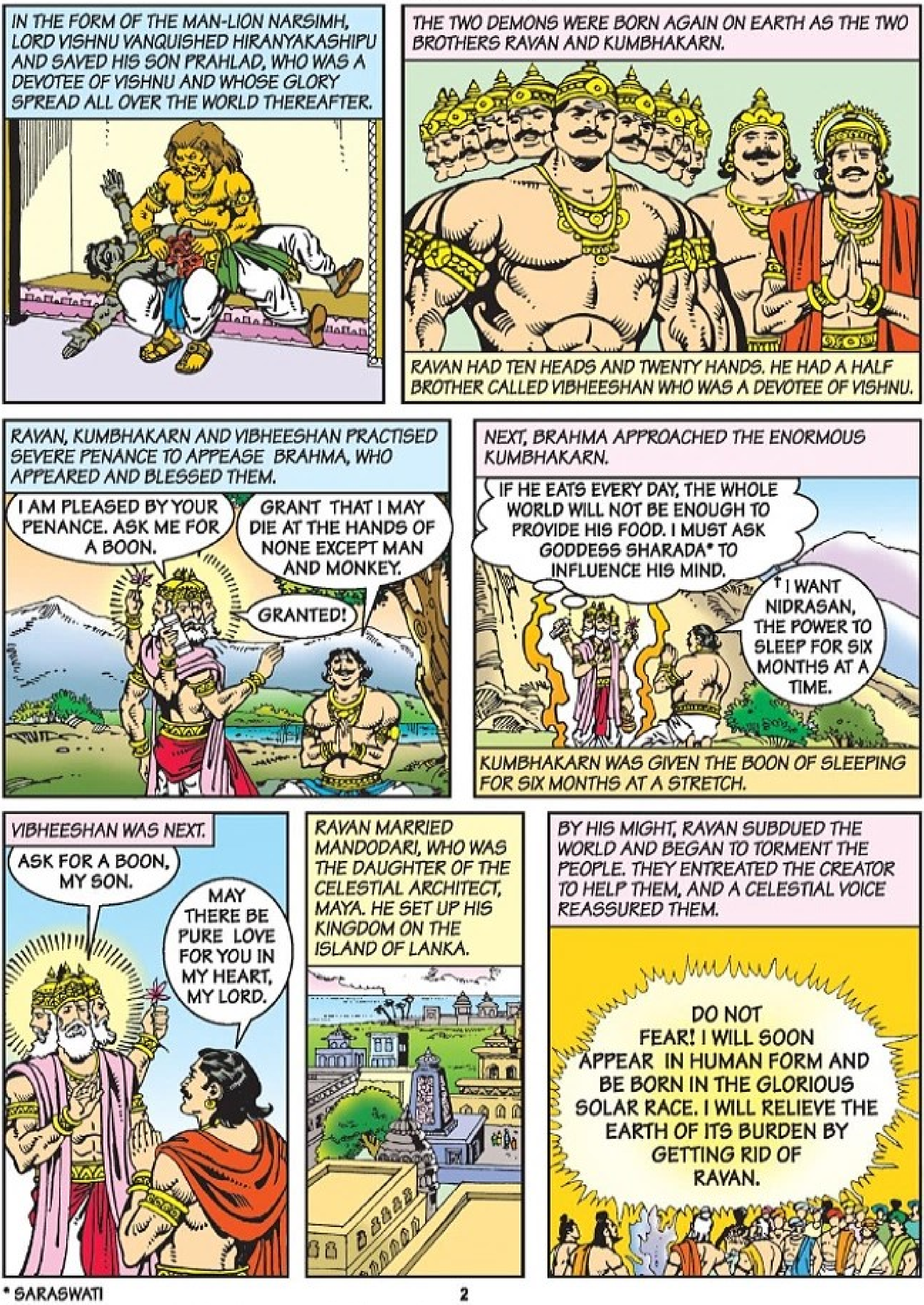
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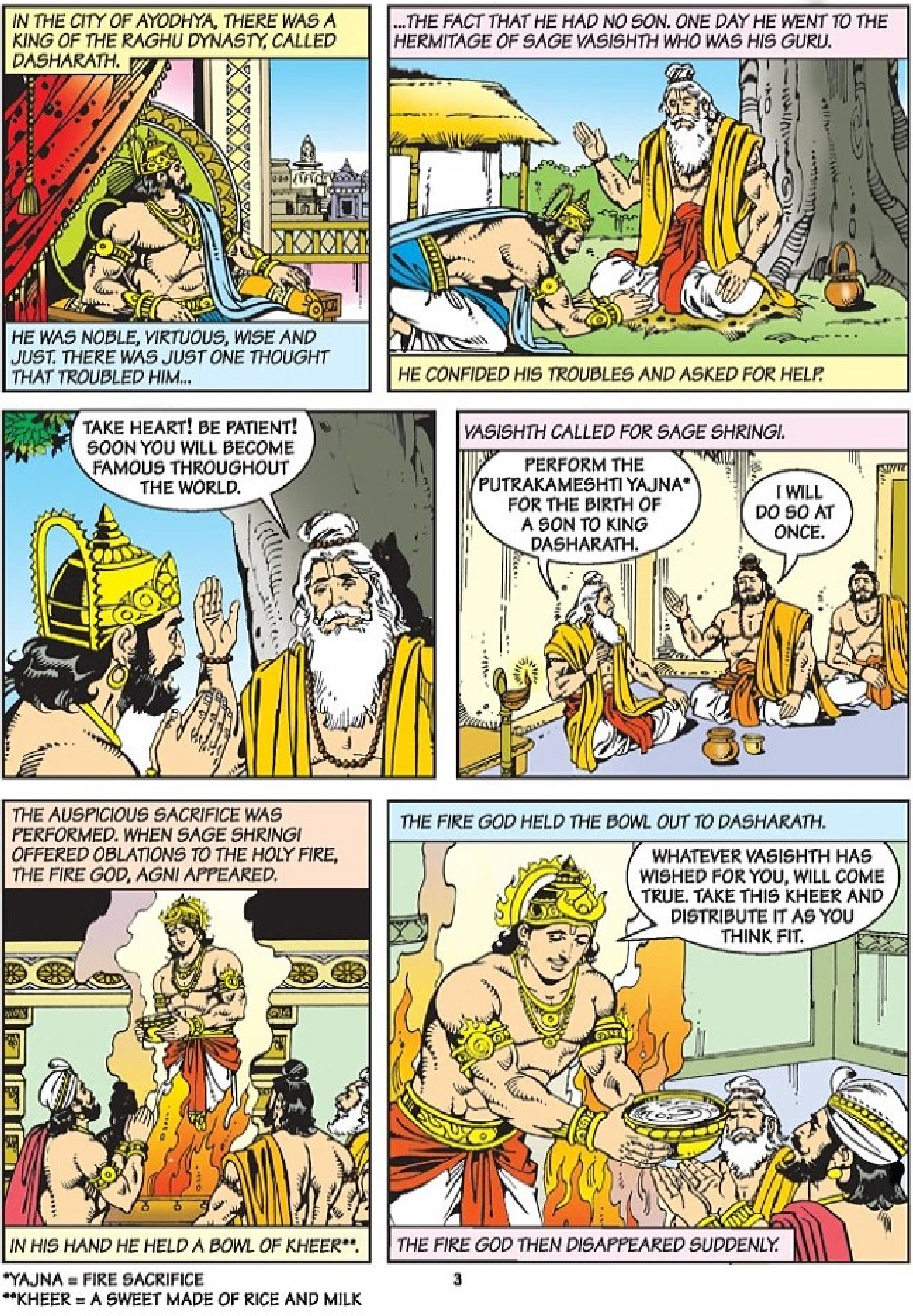
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THE CHILDHOOD DAYS OF RAM
IN THEIR CELESTIAL ABODE ATOP THE HOLY MOUNTAIN OF KAILAS, THE DIVINE PAIR SHIV AND PARVATI DWELT IN PERFECT HAPPINESS.
O LORD OF THE UNIVERSE, TELL ME THE STORY OF RAM, THE LORD OF RAGHUS.
VARIOUS WONDERFUL DEEDS OF RAM FILLED SHIV'S MIND. HIS EYES SPARKLED AS THE VISION OF RAM FILLED HIS HEART WITH JOY.
FOR A WHILE, SHIV WAS LOST IN BLISSFUL MEDITATION. AND THEN HE BEGAN TO RELATE THE STORY OF RAM.
LISTEN TO THE BLESSED STORY OF THE HOLY RAM CHARIT MANAS THAT WAS NARRATED BY SAGE BHUSHUNDI AND HEARD BY GARUD, THE KING OF BIRDS.
INFINITE ARE THE VIRTUES AND NAMES OF LORD RAM AND COUNTLESS ARE THE STORIES OF HIS INCARNATIONS. LET ME NARRATE TO YOU TWO OF THESE STORIES.
LORD VISHNU HAD TWO GATEKEEPERS, JAY AND VIJAY, AT THE GATE OF HIS CELESTIAL DWELLING, VAIKUNTH. OWING TO THE CURSE PLACED ON THEM, THEY WERE BORN ON EARTH AS WICKED DEMONS: HIRANYAKASHIPU AND HIRANYAKSH, WHO TERRORISED THE WORLD WITH THEIR WICKED WAYS.
LORD VISHNU ASSUMED THE FORM OF A BOAR AND KILLED HIRANYAKSH.
THIS WAS DURING VISHNU'S INCARNATION AS VARAH OR BOAR.

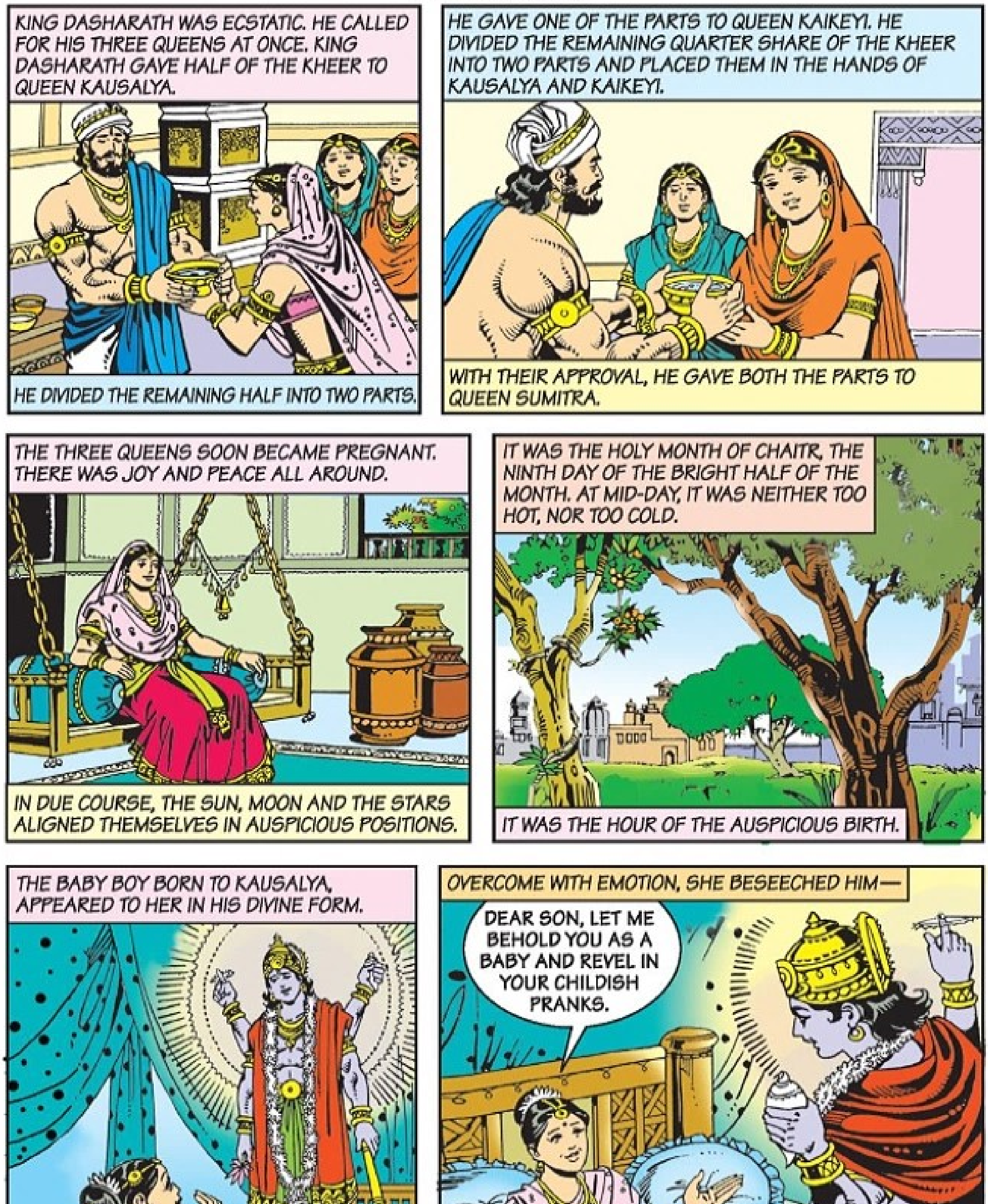


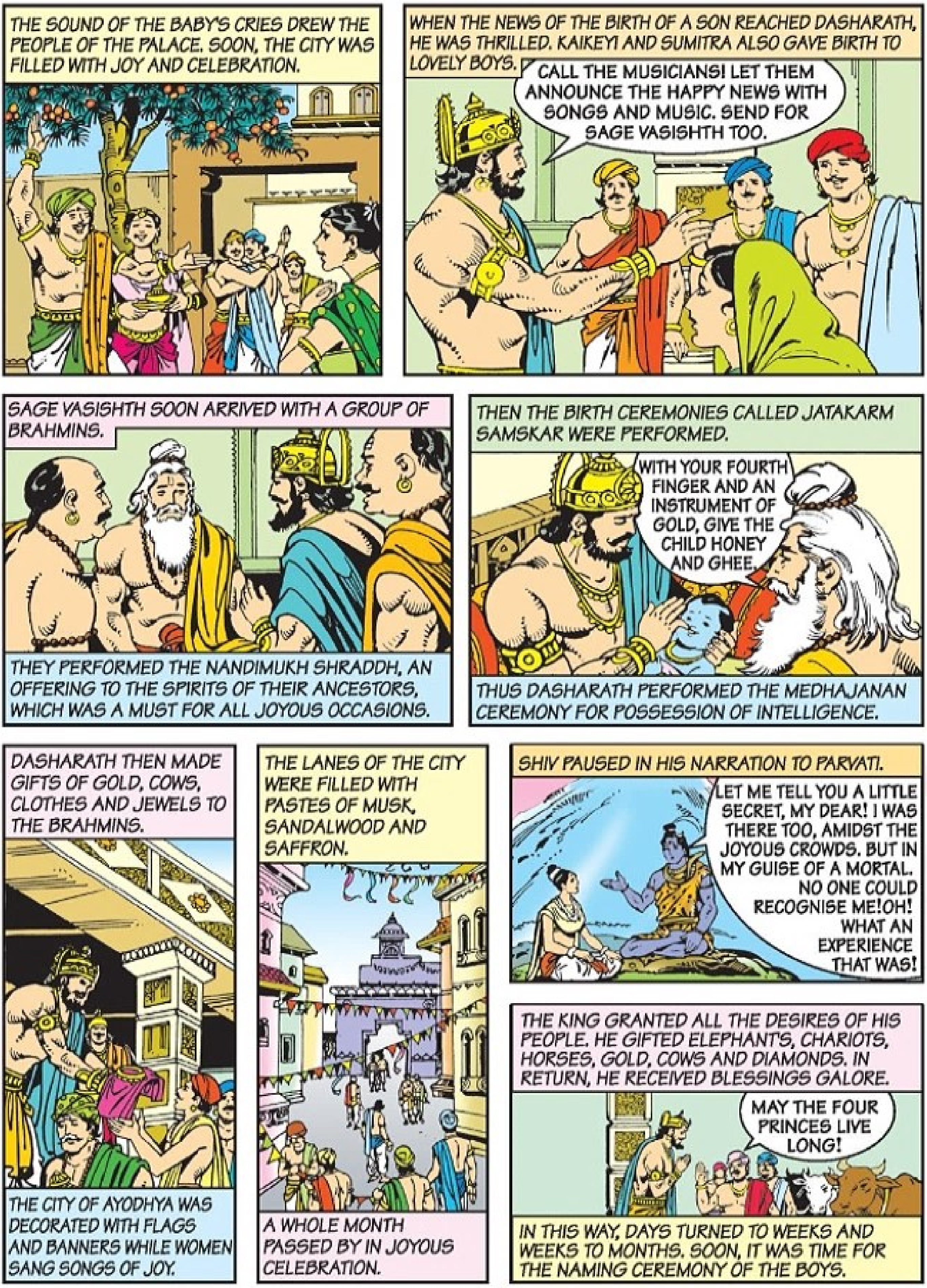
* SARASWATI

† HE WANTED THE BOON OF INDRASAN, INDRA'S SEAT. INSTEAD HE ASKED FOR NIDRASAN, ACCORDING TO A LEGEND.



*YAJNA = FIRE SACRIFICE
**KHEER = A SWEET MADE OF RICE AND MILK


KING DASHARATH WAS ECSTATIC. HE CALLED FOR HIS THREE QUEENS AT ONCE. KING DASHARATH GAVE HALF OF THE KHEER TO QUEEN KAUSALYA.
HE DIVIDED THE REMAINING HALF INTO TWO PARTS.
HE GAVE ONE OF THE PARTS TO QUEEN KAIKEYI. HE DIVIDED THE REMAINING QUARTER SHARE OF THE KHEER INTO TWO PARTS AND PLACED THEM IN THE HANDS OF KAUSALYA AND KAIKEYI.
WITH THEIR APPROVAL, HE GAVE BOTH THE PARTS TO QUEEN SUMITRA.
THE THREE QUEENS SOON BECAME PREGNANT. THERE WAS JOY AND PEACE ALL AROUND.
IN DUE COURSE, THE SUN, MOON AND THE STARS ALIGNED THEMSELVES IN AUSPICIOUS POSITIONS.
IT WAS THE HOLY MONTH OF CHAITR, THE NINTH DAY OF THE BRIGHT HALF OF THE MONTH. AT MID-DAY, IT WAS NEITHER TOO HOT, NOR TOO COLD.
IT WAS THE HOUR OF THE AUSPICIOUS BIRTH.
THE BABY BOY BORN TO KAUSALYA, APPEARED TO HER IN HIS DIVINE FORM.
HIS BODY WAS AS DARK AS A CLOUD AND BEDECKED WITH JEWELS AND FLOWERS. IN HIS FOUR ARMS HE CARRIED A CONCH SHELL, A DISCUS, A CLUB AND A LOTUS.
OVERCOME WITH EMOTION, SHE BESEECHED HIM—
DEAR SON, LET ME BEHOLD YOU AS A BABY AND REVEL IN YOUR CHILDISH PRANKS.
AT ONCE, THE DIVINE CHILD TOOK THE FORM OF A NEWBORN BABY AND BEGAN TO WAIL.

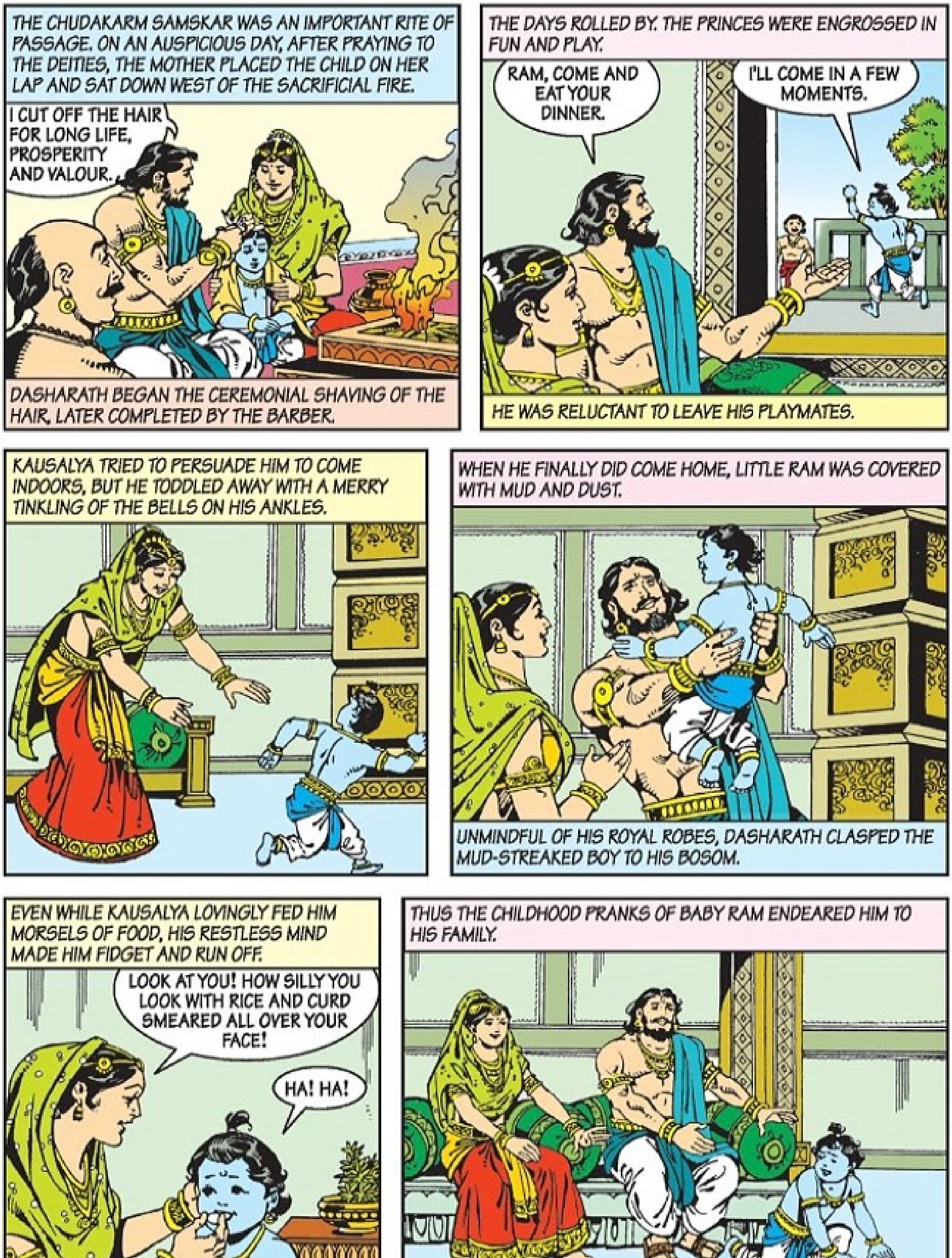

THE SOUND OF THE BABY'S CRIES DREW THE PEOPLE OF THE PALACE. SOON, THE CITY WAS FILLED WITH JOY AND CELEBRATION.
WHEN THE NEWS OF THE BIRTH OF A SON REACHED DASHARATH, HE WAS THRILLED. KAIKEYI AND SUMITRA ALSO GAVE BIRTH TO LOVELY BOYS.
CALL THE MUSICIANS! LET THEM ANNOUNCE THE HAPPY NEWS WITH SONGS AND MUSIC. SEND FOR SAGE VASISHTH TOO.
SAGE VASISHTH SOON ARRIVED WITH A GROUP OF BRAHMINS.
THEY PERFORMED THE NANDIMUKH SHRADDH, AN OFFERING TO THE SPIRITS OF THEIR ANCESTORS, WHICH WAS A MUST FOR ALL JOYOUS OCCASIONS.
THEN THE BIRTH CEREMONIES CALLED JATAKARM SAMSKAR WERE PERFORMED.
WITH YOUR FOURTH FINGER AND AN INSTRUMENT OF GOLD, GIVE THE CHILD HONEY AND GHEE.
THUS DASHARATH PERFORMED THE MEDHAJANAN CEREMONY FOR POSSESSION OF INTELLIGENCE.
DASHARATH THEN MADE GIFTS OF GOLD, COWS, CLOTHES AND JEWELS TO THE BRAHMINS.
THE CITY OF AYODHYA WAS DECORATED WITH FLAGS AND BANNERS WHILE WOMEN SANG SONGS OF JOY.
THE LANES OF THE CITY WERE FILLED WITH PASTES OF MUSK, SANDALWOOD AND SAFFRON.
A WHOLE MONTH PASSED BY IN JOYOUS CELEBRATION.
SHIV PAUSED IN HIS NARRATION TO PARVATI.
LET ME TELL YOU A LITTLE SECRET, MY DEAR! I WAS THERE TOO, AMIDST THE JOYOUS CROWDS. BUT IN MY GUISE OF A MORTAL. NO ONE COULD RECOGNISE ME!OH! WHAT AN EXPERIENCE THAT WAS!
THE KING GRANTED ALL THE DESIRES OF HIS PEOPLE. HE GIFTED ELEPHANT'S, CHARIOTS, HORSES, GOLD, COWS AND DIAMONDS. IN RETURN, HE RECEIVED BLESSINGS GALORE.
MAY THE FOUR PRINCES LIVE LONG!
IN THIS WAY, DAYS TURNED TO WEEKS AND WEEKS TO MONTHS. SOON, IT WAS TIME FOR THE NAMING CEREMONY OF THE BOYS.

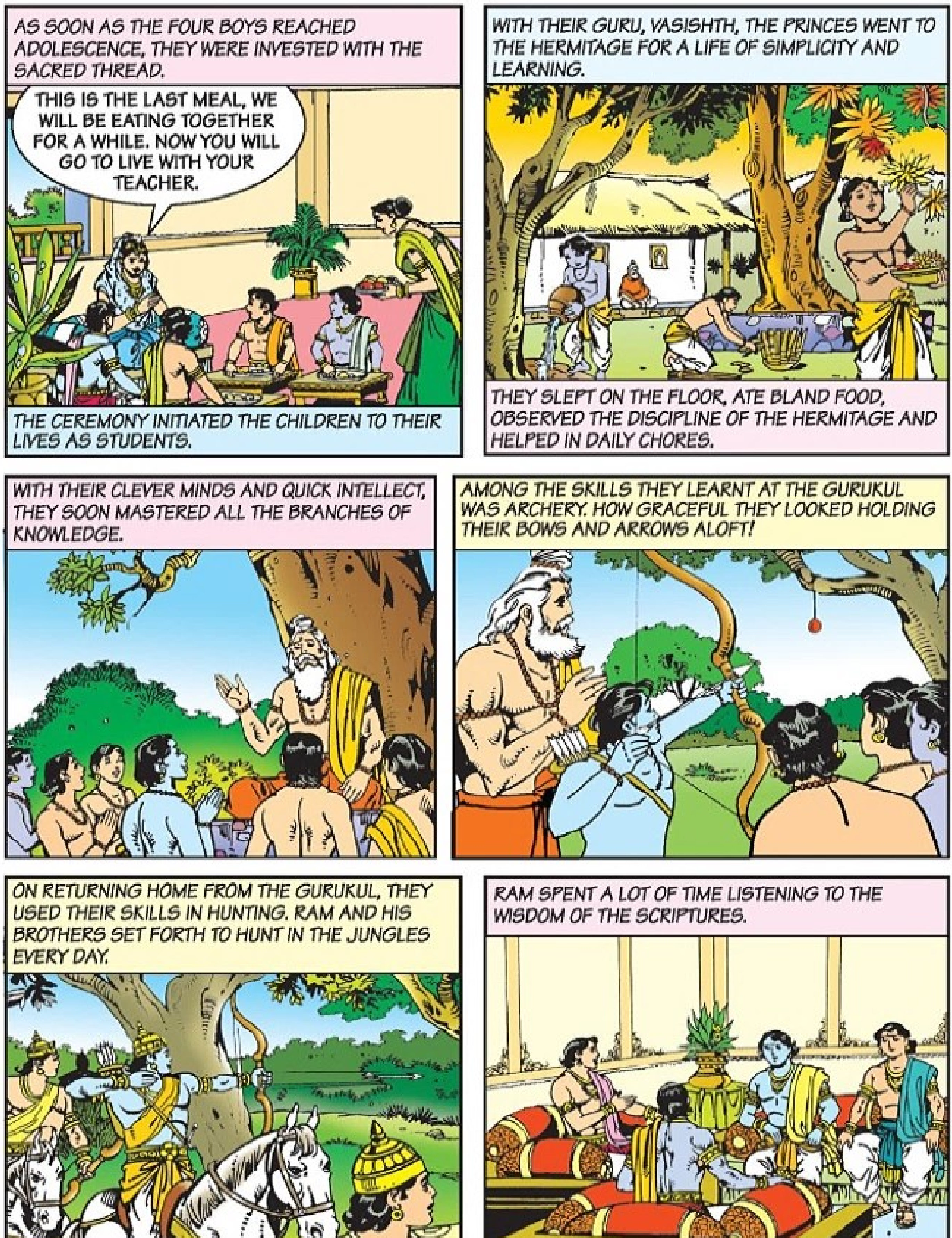


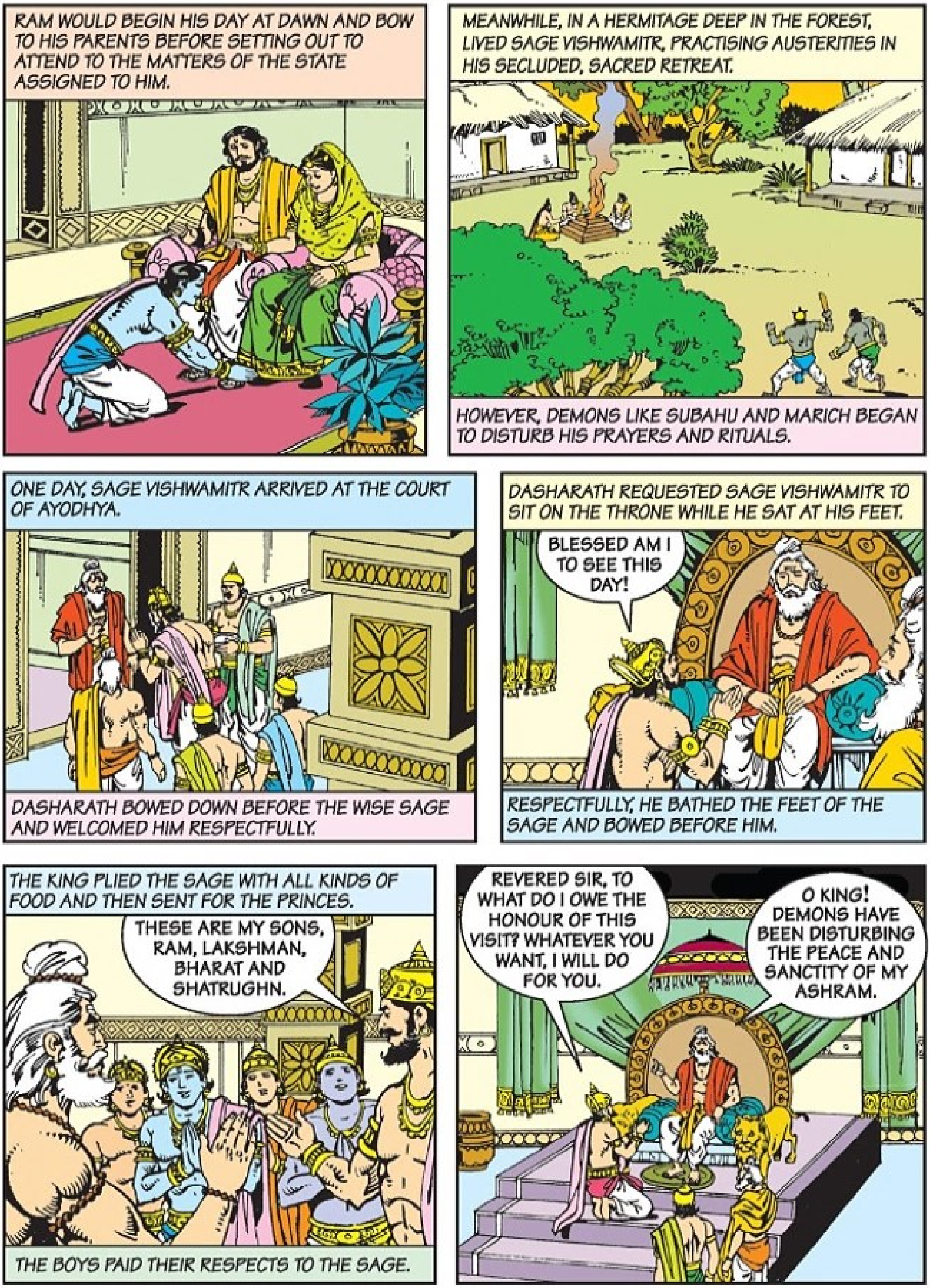
* KAUSALYA'S SON WAS RAM; KAIKEYI'S SON WAS BHARAT; SUMITRA'S TWIN BOYS WERE SHATRUGHN AND LAKSHMAN.


THE MOTHERS GAZED FONDLY AT THE PAIRS OF TODDLERS, AS THEY RAN AROUND THE PALACE.
HOW SWEET THEY LOOK. A PAIR OF DARK AND FAIR BOYS.
HUSH! BREAK A BLADE OF GRASS AND AVERT THE EVIL EYE.
ALL THE BOYS WERE GOOD-LOOKING AND PLEASANT NATURED.
BUT RAM WAS SOMEWHAT SPECIAL.
MY DARLING LITTLE BOY! YOUR LAUGHTER IS SOFT AND SOOTHING LIKE THE RAYS OF THE MOON.
GURGLE!
ON HIS LITTLE FEET, WERE THE NOBLE SIGNS THAT SIGNIFIED HIS ROYAL FUTURE.
TINY BELLS GIRDLED HIS WAIST AND HIS PLUMP STOMACH CREASED INTO THREE FOLDS.
MANY ORNAMENTS BEDECKED HIS ARMS AND NECK.
HE HAD LONG LUSTROUS HAIR, WHICH HIS MOTHER LOVED TO COMB AND CURL.
ONE DAY, AFTER BATHING AND DRESSING UP HER SON, SHE PLACED HIM IN THE CRADLE.
NOW, LITTLE ONE, SLEEP A WHILE, TILL I BATHE AND FINISH MY PRAYERS.
HAVING WORSHIPPED THE FAMILY DEITY, SHE MADE OFFERINGS OF DELICIOUS SWEETS. THEN SHE STEPPED OVER TO THE KITCHEN FOR A WHILE.
ON HER RETURN TO THE PUJA ROOM, SHE STOOD AGHAST. SHE SAW HER SON RAM DEVOURING THE FOOD SHE HAD OFFERED TO THE GODS.

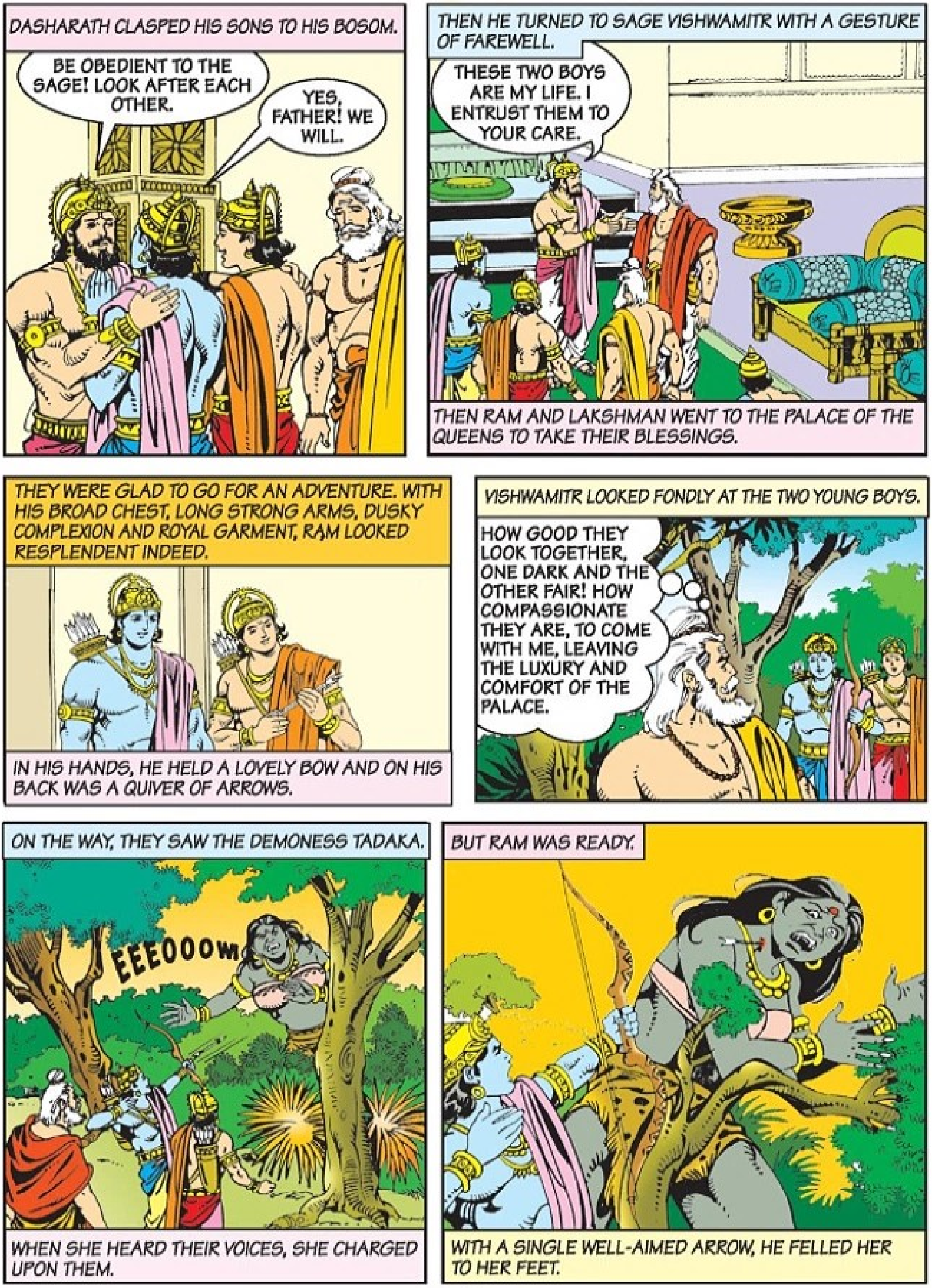

SHE STOOD TRANSFIXED.
HOW CAN THIS BE POSSIBLE?
FRIGHTENED, SHE RAN TOWARDS THE CRADLE WHERE SHE HAD LULLED THE BABY TO SLEEP.
TO HER AMAZEMENT, SHE FOUND THE BABY RAM COSILY CUDDLED UP IN THE CRADLE, FAST ASLEEP.
YET SHE HAD FOUND HIM NEAR THE WORSHIP ROOM TOO.
IS IT A TRICK OF MY MIND? WHAT IS HAPPENING HERE?
WHEN RAM SAW HIS MOTHER THUS PERPLEXED…
…HE SMILED SWEETLY AND DISPLAYED HIS WONDROUS DIVINE FORM.
SHE SAW THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE ON EACH PORE OF HIS BODY. THERE WERE SUNS AND MOONS, MOUNTAINS, RIVERS, WOODS AND MANY WONDROUS THINGS SHE HAD NEVER SEEN BEFORE.
SPEECHLESS AT THE SIGHT, KAUSALYA CLOSED HER EYES AND BOWED HER HEAD. WHEN SHE OPENED HER EYES, SHE FOUND HER LITTLE BABY BOY BEFORE HER.
LISTEN MOTHER, NEVER REVEAL WHAT YOU SAW JUST NOW.
NEVER! MAY THIS ILLUSION CAST A SPELL ON ME!
TO HER RELIEF, RAM REVERTED TO HIS CHILDISH PRANKS AND GAMES.
IT IS TIME TO PERFORM THEIR TONSURE.
LET THE ARRANGEMENTS BE MADE FOR THE CEREMONY. INVITE THE PRIESTS AND RELATIVES FOR THE OCCASION.

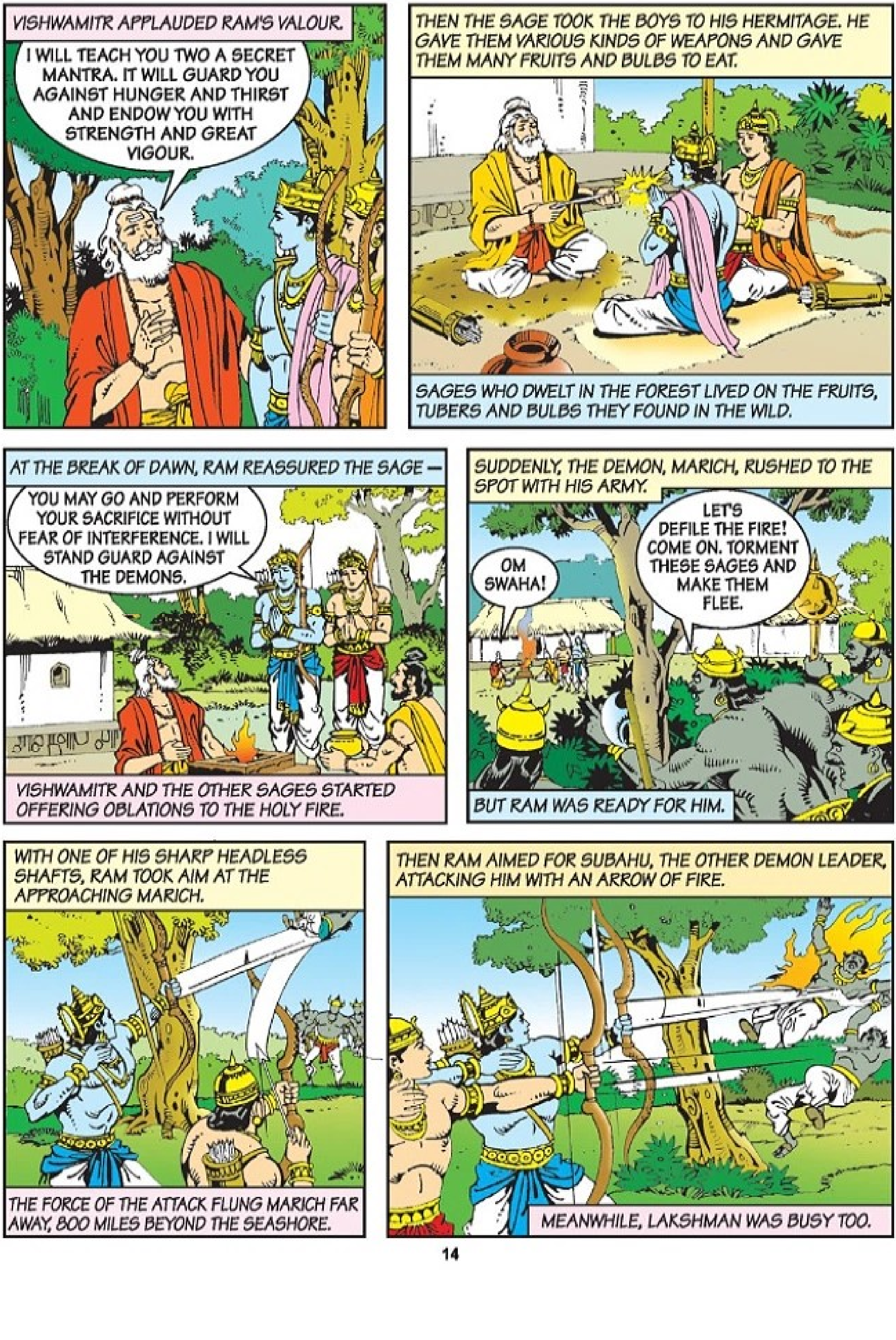

THE CHUDAKARM SAMSKAR WAS AN IMPORTANT RITE OF PASSAGE. ON AN AUSPICIOUS DAY, AFTER PRAYING TO THE DEITIES, THE MOTHER PLACED THE CHILD ON HER LAP AND SAT DOWN WEST OF THE SACRIFICIAL FIRE.
I CUT OFF THE HAIR FOR LONG LIFE, PROSPERITY AND VALOUR.
DASHARATH BEGAN THE CEREMONIAL SHAVING OF THE HAIR, LATER COMPLETED BY THE BARBER.
THE DAYS ROLLED BY. THE PRINCES WERE ENGROSSED IN FUN AND PLAY.
RAM, COME AND EAT YOUR DINNER.
I'LL COME IN A FEW MOMENTS.
HE WAS RELUCTANT TO LEAVE HIS PLAYMATES.
KAUSALYA TRIED TO PERSUADE HIM TO COME INDOORS, BUT HE TODDLED AWAY WITH A MERRY TINKLING OF THE BELLS ON HIS ANKLES.
WHEN HE FINALLY DID COME HOME, LITTLE RAM WAS COVERED WITH MUD AND DUST.
UNMINDFUL OF HIS ROYAL ROBES, DASHARATH CLASPED THE MUD-STREAKED BOY TO HIS BOSOM.
EVEN WHILE KAUSALYA LOVINGLY FED HIM MORSELS OF FOOD, HIS RESTLESS MIND MADE HIM FIDGET AND RUN OFF.
LOOK AT YOU! HOW SILLY YOU LOOK WITH RICE AND CURD SMEARED ALL OVER YOUR FACE!
HA! HA!
THUS THE CHILDHOOD PRANKS OF BABY RAM ENDEARED HIM TO HIS FAMILY.

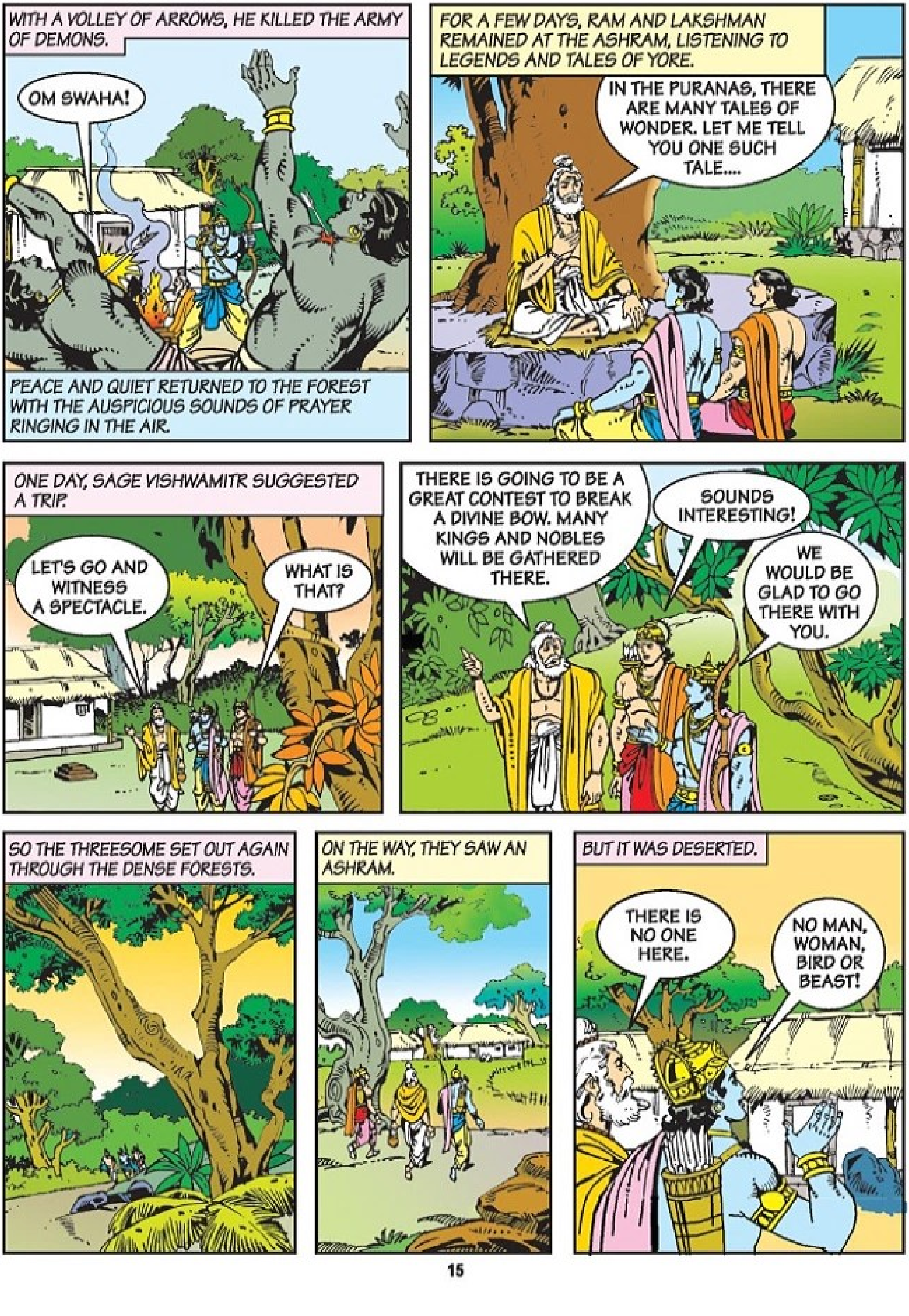

AS SOON AS THE FOUR BOYS REACHED ADOLESCENCE, THEY WERE INVESTED WITH THE SACRED THREAD.
THIS IS THE LAST MEAL, WE WILL BE EATING TOGETHER FOR A WHILE. NOW YOU WILL GO TO LIVE WITH YOUR TEACHER.
THE CEREMONY INITIATED THE CHILDREN TO THEIR LIVES AS STUDENTS.
WITH THEIR GURU, VASISHTH, THE PRINCES WENT TO THE HERMITAGE FOR A LIFE OF SIMPLICITY AND LEARNING.
THEY SLEPT ON THE FLOOR, ATE BLAND FOOD, OBSERVED THE DISCIPLINE OF THE HERMITAGE AND HELPED IN DAILY CHORES.
WITH THEIR CLEVER MINDS AND QUICK INTELLECT, THEY SOON MASTERED ALL THE BRANCHES OF KNOWLEDGE.
AMONG THE SKILLS THEY LEARNT AT THE GURUKUL WAS ARCHERY. HOW GRACEFUL THEY LOOKED HOLDING THEIR BOWS AND ARROWS ALOFT!
ON RETURNING HOME FROM THE GURUKUL, THEY USED THEIR SKILLS IN HUNTING. RAM AND HIS BROTHERS SET FORTH TO HUNT IN THE JUNGLES EVERY DAY.
BUT THEY HUNTED AND KILLED ONLY THOSE ANIMALS THAT WERE ALLOWED TO BE HUNTED.
RAM SPENT A LOT OF TIME LISTENING TO THE WISDOM OF THE SCRIPTURES.
HE WAS ATTENTIVE AT ALL SUCH RECITALS AND EXPLAINED THE ETERNAL TRUTHS TO HIS YOUNGER BROTHERS.

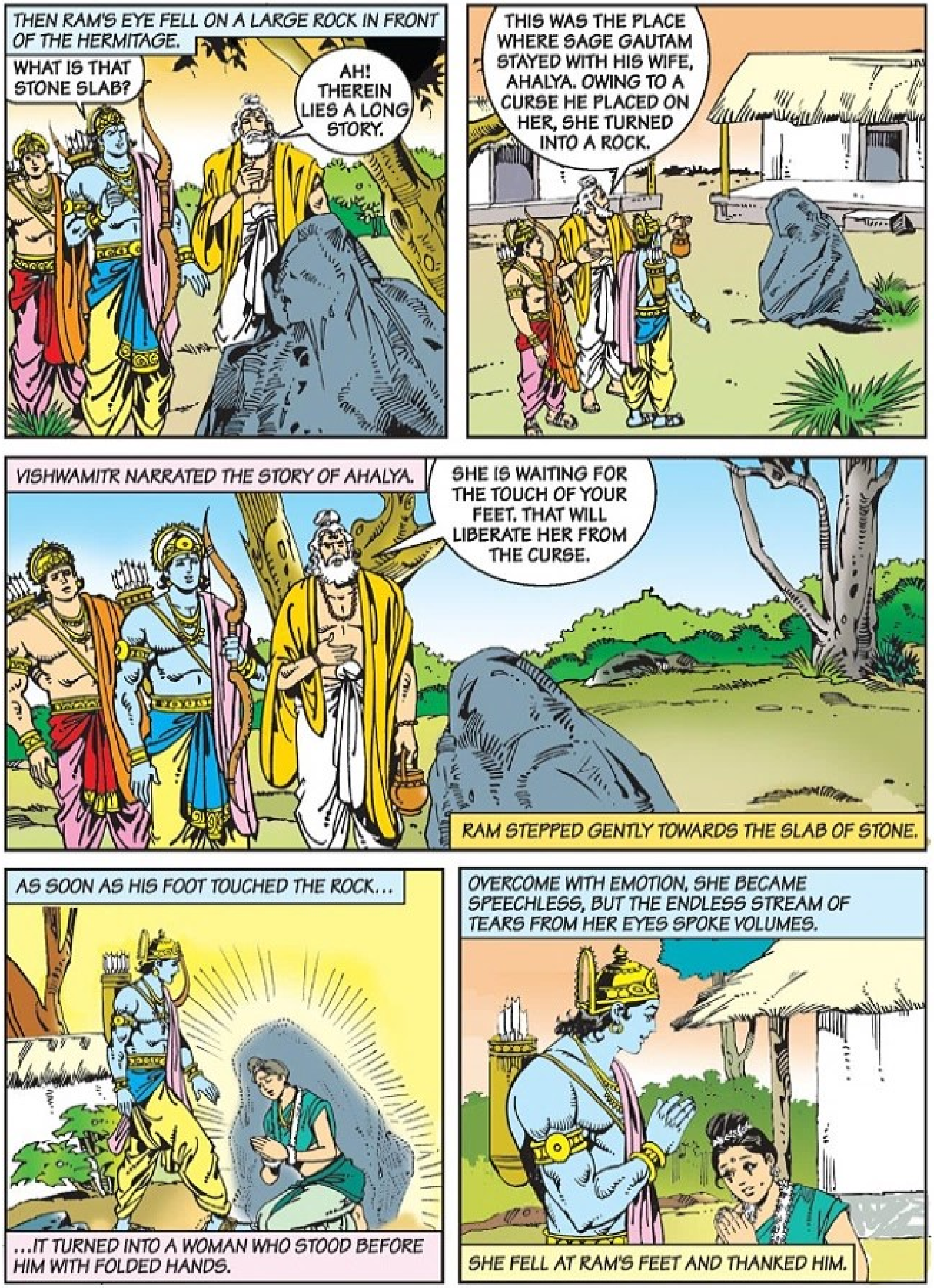

RAM WOULD BEGIN HIS DAY AT DAWN AND BOW TO HIS PARENTS BEFORE SETTING OUT TO ATTEND TO THE MATTERS OF THE STATE ASSIGNED TO HIM.
MEANWHILE, IN A HERMITAGE DEEP IN THE FOREST, LIVED SAGE VISHWAMITR, PRACTISING AUSTERITIES IN HIS SECLUDED, SACRED RETREAT.
HOWEVER, DEMONS LIKE SUBAHU AND MARICH BEGAN TO DISTURB HIS PRAYERS AND RITUALS.
ONE DAY, SAGE VISHWAMITR ARRIVED AT THE COURT OF AYODHYA.
DASHARATH BOWED DOWN BEFORE THE WISE SAGE AND WELCOMED HIM RESPECTFULLY.
DASHARATH REQUESTED SAGE VISHWAMITR TO SIT ON THE THRONE WHILE HE SAT AT HIS FEET.
BLESSED AM I TO SEE THIS DAY!
RESPECTFULLY, HE BATHED THE FEET OF THE SAGE AND BOWED BEFORE HIM.
THE KING PLIED THE SAGE WITH ALL KINDS OF FOOD AND THEN SENT FOR THE PRINCES.
THESE ARE MY SONS, RAM, LAKSHMAN, BHARAT AND SHATRUGHN.
THE BOYS PAID THEIR RESPECTS TO THE SAGE.
REVERED SIR, TO WHAT DO I OWE THE HONOUR OF THIS VISIT? WHATEVER YOU WANT, I WILL DO FOR YOU.
O KING! DEMONS HAVE BEEN DISTURBING THE PEACE AND SANCTITY OF MY ASHRAM.

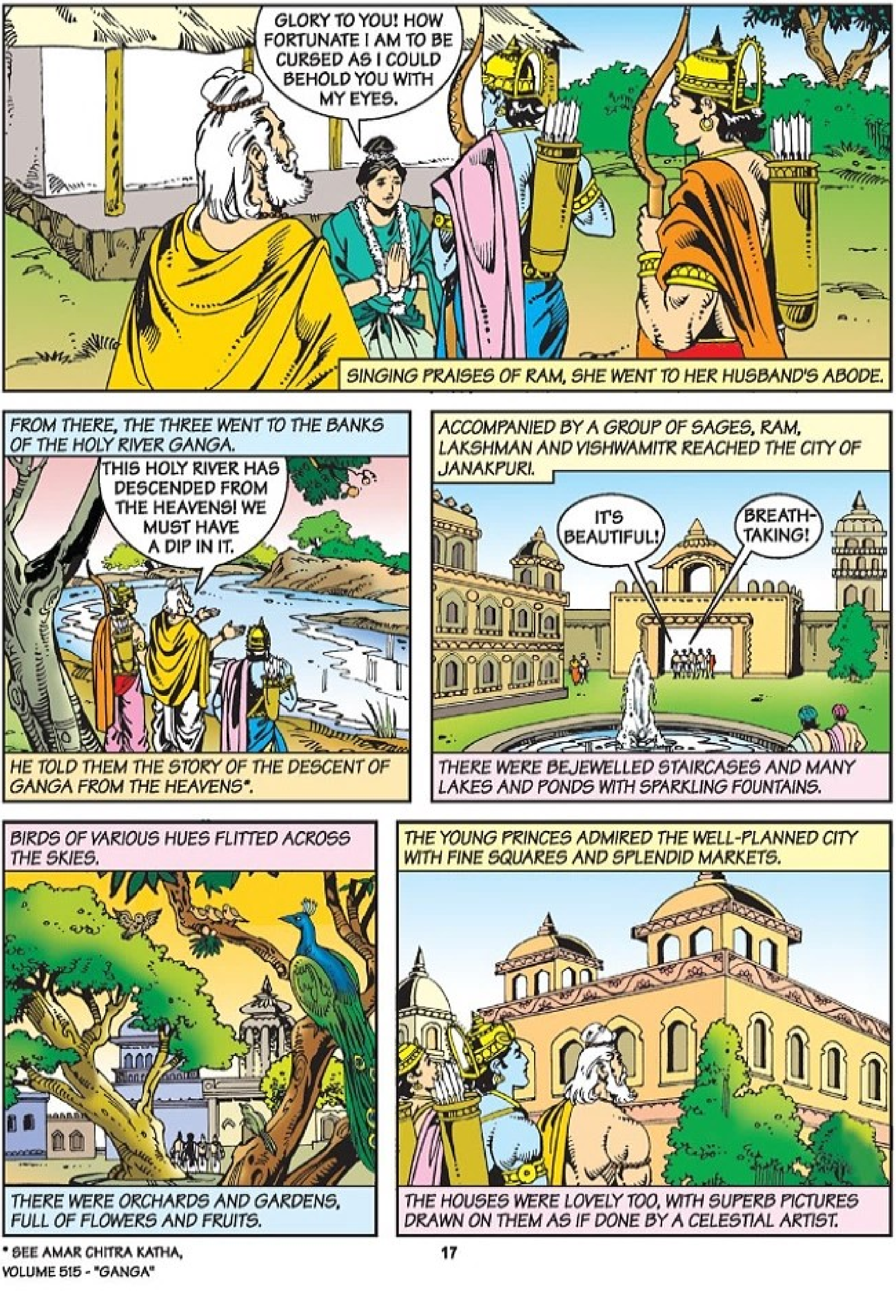

I WANT A FAVOUR FROM YOU. SEND RAM AND HIS YOUNGER BROTHER WITH ME. I CAN THEN BE FREE FROM THE TORMENT OF THE DEMONS.
ENTRUST YOUR SONS TO ME. DON'T LET IGNORANCE OR AFFECTION STAND IN THE WAY OF YOUR DECISION. YOU WILL EARN RELIGIOUS MERIT AND YOUR SONS WILL BE BLESSED TOO.
DASHARATH'S HEART RACED AND HIS FACE GREW PALE.
OH SIR! MY SONS WERE BORN TO ME AT SUCH AN OLD AGE. I FIND IT DIFFICULT TO PART FROM THEM.
DASHARATH PLEADED WITH VISHWAMITR TO CHANGE HIS MIND.
ASK ME FOR ANYTHING ELSE. LAND, CATTLE, WEALTH OR TREASURE. EVEN MY VERY LIFE, I AM READY TO GIVE YOU WITHOUT A MOMENT'S HESITATION.
MY SONS ARE DEARER TO ME THAN LIFE ITSELF! AND RAM! HOW CAN I LET HIM GO TO A FOREST FILLED WITH HIDEOUS, CRUEL DEMONS! HE'S SO YOUNG AND DELICATE.
THE ENLIGHTENED SAGE VISHWAMITR WAS PAINED TO HEAR THE KING'S EMOTIONAL OUTBURST.
IT WAS THEN THAT VASISHTH INTERVENED.
LET THEM GO! THEY ARE OLD ENOUGH AND SKILLED TO DO THIS TASK.
IF YOU SAY SO!
THE TWO BOYS WERE CALLED TO THE COURT.


DASHARATH CLASPED HIS SONS TO HIS BOSOM.
BE OBEDIENT TO THE SAGE! LOOK AFTER EACH OTHER.
YES, FATHER! WE WILL.
THEN HE TURNED TO SAGE VISHWAMITR WITH A GESTURE OF FAREWELL.
THESE TWO BOYS ARE MY LIFE. I ENTRUST THEM TO YOUR CARE.
THEN RAM AND LAKSHMAN WENT TO THE PALACE OF THE QUEENS TO TAKE THEIR BLESSINGS.
THEY WERE GLAD TO GO FOR AN ADVENTURE. WITH HIS BROAD CHEST, LONG STRONG ARMS, DUSKY COMPLEXION AND ROYAL GARMENT, RAM LOOKED RESPLENDENT INDEED.
IN HIS HANDS, HE HELD A LOVELY BOW AND ON HIS BACK WAS A QUIVER OF ARROWS.
VISHWAMITR LOOKED FONDLY AT THE TWO YOUNG BOYS.
HOW GOOD THEY LOOK TOGETHER, ONE DARK AND THE OTHER FAIR! HOW COMPASSIONATE THEY ARE, TO COME WITH ME, LEAVING THE LUXURY AND COMFORT OF THE PALACE.
ON THE WAY, THEY SAW THE DEMONESS TADAKA.
EEEOOOW
WHEN SHE HEARD THEIR VOICES, SHE CHARGED UPON THEM.
BUT RAM WAS READY.
WITH A SINGLE WELL-AIMED ARROW, HE FELLED HER TO HER FEET.

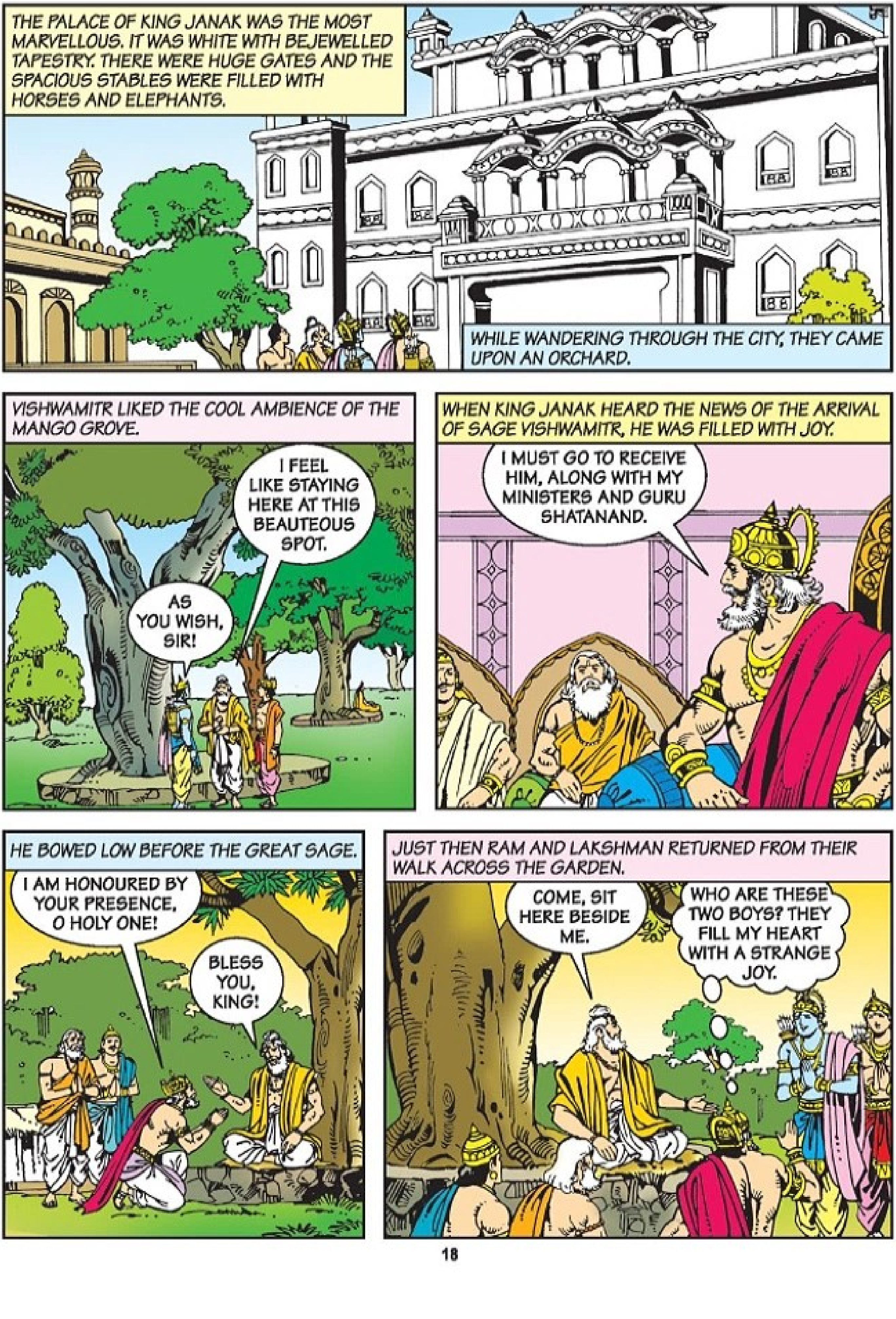

VISHWAMITR APPLAUDED RAM'S VALOUR.
I WILL TEACH YOU TWO A SECRET MANTRA. IT WILL GUARD YOU AGAINST HUNGER AND THIRST AND ENDOW YOU WITH STRENGTH AND GREAT VIGOUR.
THEN THE SAGE TOOK THE BOYS TO HIS HERMITAGE. HE GAVE THEM VARIOUS KINDS OF WEAPONS AND GAVE THEM MANY FRUITS AND BULBS TO EAT.
SAGES WHO DWELT IN THE FOREST LIVED ON THE FRUITS, TUBERS AND BULBS THEY FOUND IN THE WILD.
AT THE BREAK OF DAWN, RAM REASSURED THE SAGE —
YOU MAY GO AND PERFORM YOUR SACRIFICE WITHOUT FEAR OF INTERFERENCE. I WILL STAND GUARD AGAINST THE DEMONS.
VISHWAMITR AND THE OTHER SAGES STARTED OFFERING OBLATIONS TO THE HOLY FIRE.
SUDDENLY, THE DEMON, MARICH, RUSHED TO THE SPOT WITH HIS ARMY.
OM SWAHA!
LET'S DEFILE THE FIRE! COME ON. TORMENT THESE SAGES AND MAKE THEM FLEE.
BUT RAM WAS READY FOR HIM.
WITH ONE OF HIS SHARP HEADLESS SHAFTS, RAM TOOK AIM AT THE APPROACHING MARICH.
THE FORCE OF THE ATTACK FLUNG MARICH FAR AWAY, 800 MILES BEYOND THE SEASHORE.
THEN RAM AIMED FOR SUBAHU, THE OTHER DEMON LEADER, ATTACKING HIM WITH AN ARROW OF FIRE.
MEANWHILE, LAKSHMAN WAS BUSY TOO.

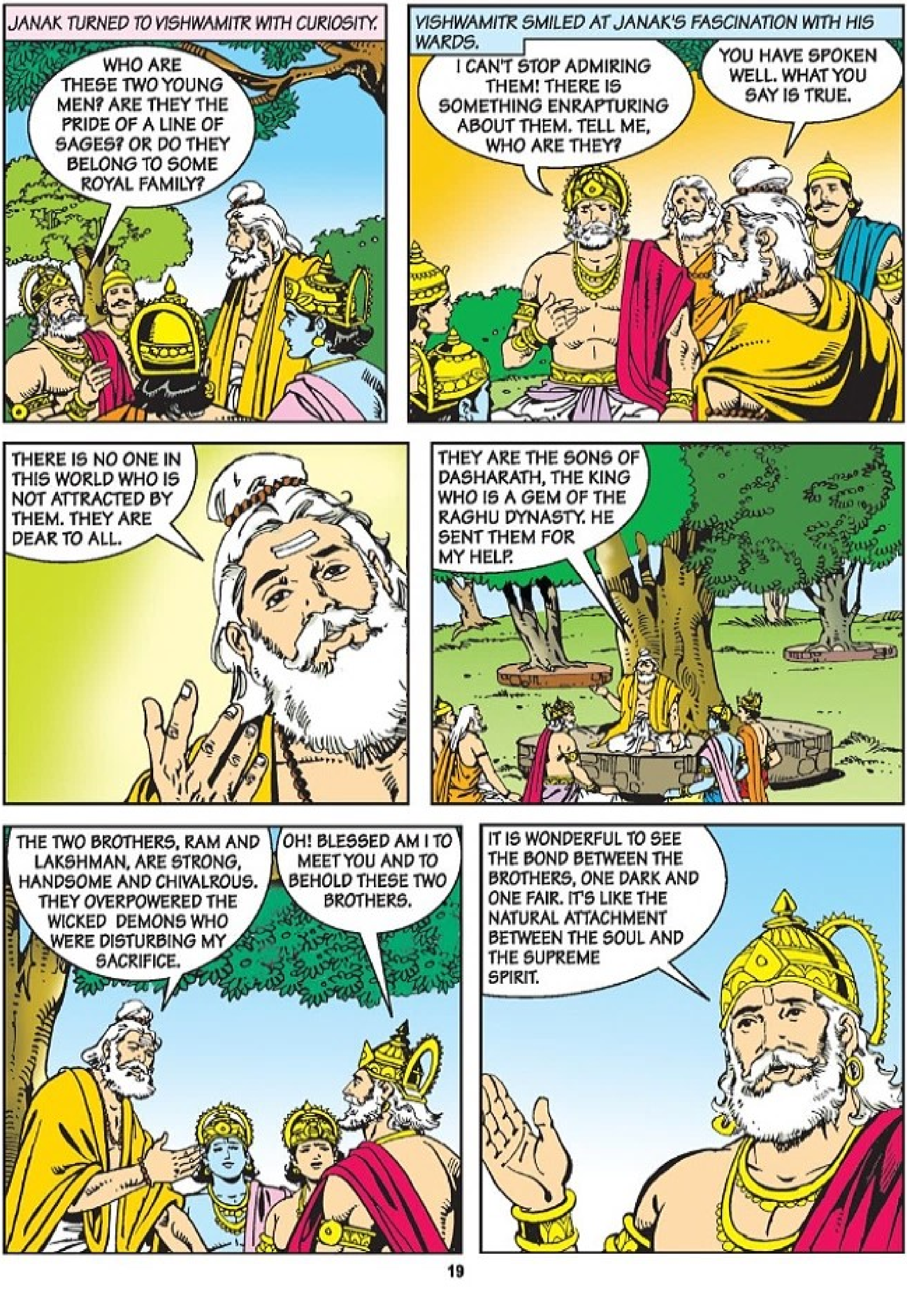

WITH A VOLLEY OF ARROWS, HE KILLED THE ARMY OF DEMONS.
OM SWAHA!
PEACE AND QUIET RETURNED TO THE FOREST WITH THE AUSPICIOUS SOUNDS OF PRAYER RINGING IN THE AIR.
FOR A FEW DAYS, RAM AND LAKSHMAN REMAINED AT THE ASHRAM, LISTENING TO LEGENDS AND TALES OF YORE.
IN THE PURANAS, THERE ARE MANY TALES OF WONDER. LET ME TELL YOU ONE SUCH TALE....
ONE DAY, SAGE VISHWAMITR SUGGESTED A TRIP.
LET'S GO AND WITNESS A SPECTACLE.
WHAT IS THAT?
THERE IS GOING TO BE A GREAT CONTEST TO BREAK A DIVINE BOW. MANY KINGS AND NOBLES WILL BE GATHERED THERE.
SOUNDS INTERESTING!
WE WOULD BE GLAD TO GO THERE WITH YOU.
SO THE THREESOME SET OUT AGAIN THROUGH THE DENSE FORESTS.
ON THE WAY, THEY SAW AN ASHRAM.
BUT IT WAS DESERTED.
THERE IS NO ONE HERE.
NO MAN, WOMAN, BIRD OR BEAST!


THEN RAM'S EYE FELL ON A LARGE ROCK IN FRONT OF THE HERMITAGE.
WHAT IS THAT STONE SLAB?
AH! THEREIN LIES A LONG STORY.
THIS WAS THE PLACE WHERE SAGE GAUTAM STAYED WITH HIS WIFE, AHALYA. OWING TO A CURSE HE PLACED ON HER, SHE TURNED INTO A ROCK.
VISHWAMITR NARRATED THE STORY OF AHALYA.
SHE IS WAITING FOR THE TOUCH OF YOUR FEET. THAT WILL LIBERATE HER FROM THE CURSE.
RAM STEPPED GENTLY TOWARDS THE SLAB OF STONE.
AS SOON AS HIS FOOT TOUCHED THE ROCK…
…IT TURNED INTO A WOMAN WHO STOOD BEFORE HIM WITH FOLDED HANDS.
OVERCOME WITH EMOTION, SHE BECAME SPEECHLESS, BUT THE ENDLESS STREAM OF TEARS FROM HER EYES SPOKE VOLUMES.
SHE FELL AT RAM'S FEET AND THANKED HIM.



* SEE AMAR CHITRA KATHA, VOLUME 515 - "GANGA"


THE PALACE OF KING JANAK WAS THE MOST MARVELLOUS. IT WAS WHITE WITH BEJEWELLED TAPESTRY. THERE WERE HUGE GATES AND THE SPACIOUS STABLES WERE FILLED WITH HORSES AND ELEPHANTS.
WHILE WANDERING THROUGH THE CITY, THEY CAME UPON AN ORCHARD.
VISHWAMITR LIKED THE COOL AMBIENCE OF THE MANGO GROVE.
I FEEL LIKE STAYING HERE AT THIS BEAUTEOUS SPOT.
AS YOU WISH, SIR!
WHEN KING JANAK HEARD THE NEWS OF THE ARRIVAL OF SAGE VISHWAMITR, HE WAS FILLED WITH JOY.
I MUST GO TO RECEIVE HIM, ALONG WITH MY MINISTERS AND GURU SHATANAND.
HE BOWED LOW BEFORE THE GREAT SAGE.
I AM HONOURED BY YOUR PRESENCE, O HOLY ONE!
BLESS YOU, KING!
JUST THEN RAM AND LAKSHMAN RETURNED FROM THEIR WALK ACROSS THE GARDEN.
COME, SIT HERE BESIDE ME.
WHO ARE THESE TWO BOYS? THEY FILL MY HEART WITH A STRANGE JOY.


JANAK TURNED TO VISHWAMITR WITH CURIOSITY.
WHO ARE THESE TWO YOUNG MEN? ARE THEY THE PRIDE OF A LINE OF SAGES? OR DO THEY BELONG TO SOME ROYAL FAMILY?
VISHWAMITR SMILED AT JANAK'S FASCINATION WITH HIS WARDS.
I CAN'T STOP ADMIRING THEM! THERE IS SOMETHING ENRAPTURING ABOUT THEM. TELL ME, WHO ARE THEY?
YOU HAVE SPOKEN WELL. WHAT YOU SAY IS TRUE.
THERE IS NO ONE IN THIS WORLD WHO IS NOT ATTRACTED BY THEM. THEY ARE DEAR TO ALL.
THEY ARE THE SONS OF DASHARATH, THE KING WHO IS A GEM OF THE RAGHU DYNASTY. HE SENT THEM FOR MY HELP.
THE TWO BROTHERS, RAM AND LAKSHMAN, ARE STRONG, HANDSOME AND CHIVALROUS. THEY OVERPOWERED THE WICKED DEMONS WHO WERE DISTURBING MY SACRIFICE.
OH! BLESSED AM I TO MEET YOU AND TO BEHOLD THESE TWO BROTHERS.
IT IS WONDERFUL TO SEE THE BOND BETWEEN THE BROTHERS, ONE DARK AND ONE FAIR. IT'S LIKE THE NATURAL ATTACHMENT BETWEEN THE SOUL AND THE SUPREME SPIRIT.


JANAK COURTEOUSLY ACCOMPANIED THE SAGE AND HIS RETINUE TO A PALATIAL BUILDING.
IT WAS A BEAUTIFUL DWELLING FIT FOR ALL SEASONS.
THEY SETTLED DOWN IN THEIR NEW PLACE AND WERE SERVED A SPLENDID MEAL.
PERHAPS YOU SHOULD REST FOR A WHILE.
IT'S STILL QUITE BRIGHT OUTSIDE.
IT WAS EVENING AND THE SUN HAD YET TO SET.
LAKSHMAN LOOKED OUT OF THE WINDOW WITH LONGING IN HIS HEART.
I WISH WE COULD GO AND SEE THIS WONDERFUL TOWN BY EVENING. BUT...
HMM! I KNOW WHAT HE WANTS TO DO.
RAM REALISED THAT LAKSHMAN DID NOT EXPRESS HIS DESIRE OUT OF COURTESY FOR HIS ELDERS.
MY LORD, LAKSHMAN WANTS TO SEE THE CITY, BUT IS AFRAID TO ASK YOUR PERMISSION. MAY I TAKE HIM FOR A QUICK ROUND OF THE TOWN?
OF COURSE YOU MAY DO SO! ESPECIALLY WHEN YOU ASK MY PERMISSION SO COURTEOUSLY!
WE'LL BE BACK SOON.
SOON?
AS SOON AS THE TWO YOUNG MEN STEPPED OUT, A GROUP OF BOYS BEGAN TO FOLLOW THEM.
LOOK AT THESE TWO YOUNG MEN.
THEY ARE REALLY HANDSOME.



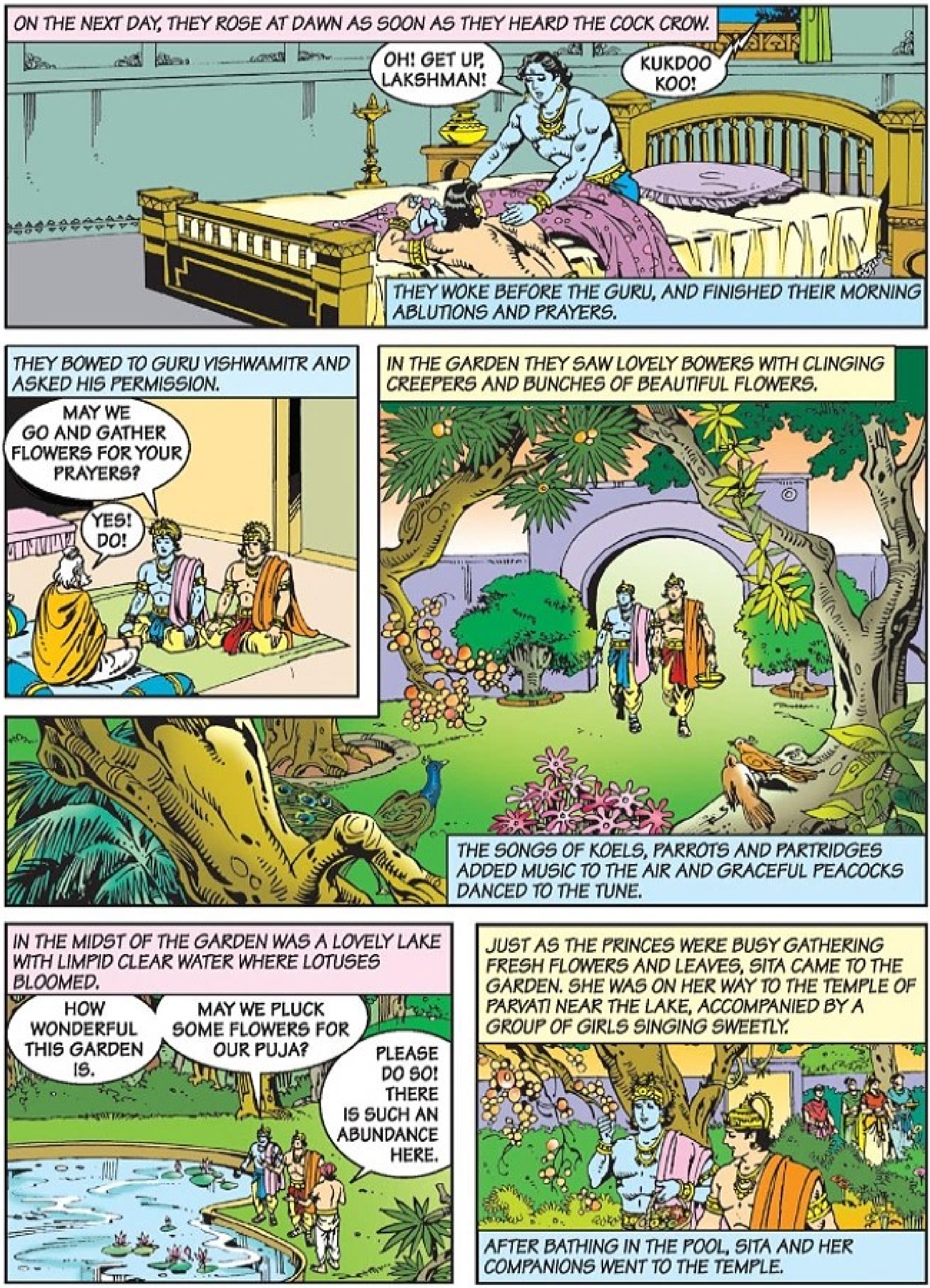
*KANAKPHOOL (KANAK = GOLD)

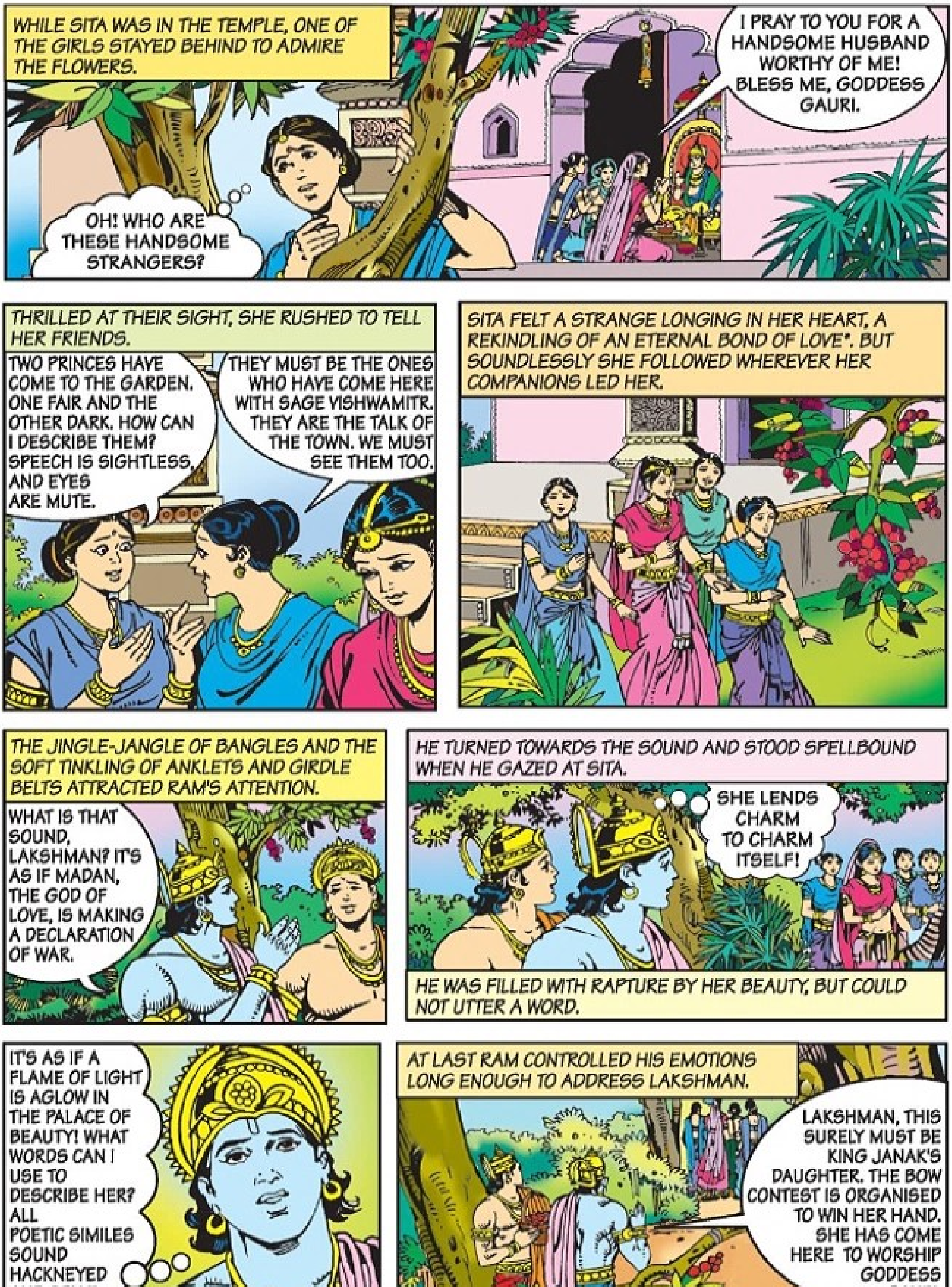
**RELIGIOUS MARK, USUALLY OF SANDALWOOD PASTE.



*JANAKI = ANOTHER NAME FOR SITA (FROM JANAK, HER FATHER)

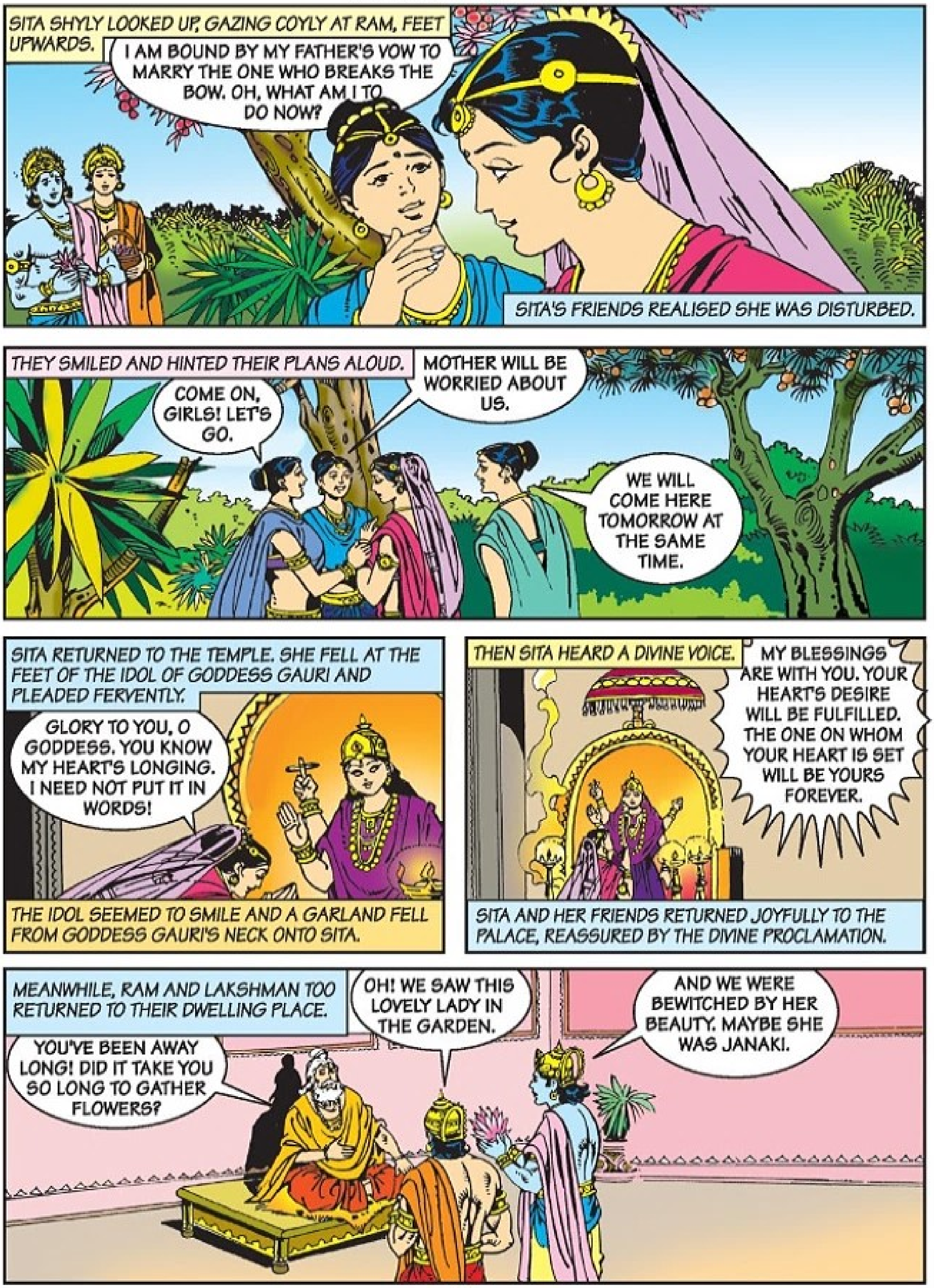

SUDDENLY THEY REALISED THAT IT WAS LATE.
OHH! THE SUN HAS GONE DOWN. WE'VE BEEN ROAMING FOR HOURS.
WE MUST GO! THANK YOU FOR SHOWING US AROUND! IT WAS WONDERFUL.
MEEKLY, ON TIP-TOE, THEY RETURNED HOME.
OH! YOU ARE BACK! IT'S TIME FOR THE EVENING PRAYER.
WE ARE BACK JUST IN TIME.
TOGETHER THEY SAID THE EVENING PRAYER.
GURU VISHWAMITR PERSUADED THEM TO REST.
THEN THE SAGE REGALED THEM WITH ANCIENT TALES AND LEGENDS.
WHEN GURU VISHWAMITR RETIRED FOR THE NIGHT, RAM AND LAKSHMAN MASSAGED HIS FEET.
THEN LAKSHMAN PRESSED RAM'S TIRED FEET.
OH LAKSHMAN! DO STOP! YOU ARE TIRED TOO.
JUST A LITTLE LONGER.
LAKSHMAN WAS TIRED, BUT STUBBORNLY CONTINUED TO MASSAGE RAM'S FEET TILL AT LAST HE TOO FELL SUPINE, CLASPING RAM'S FEET TO HIS BOSOM.

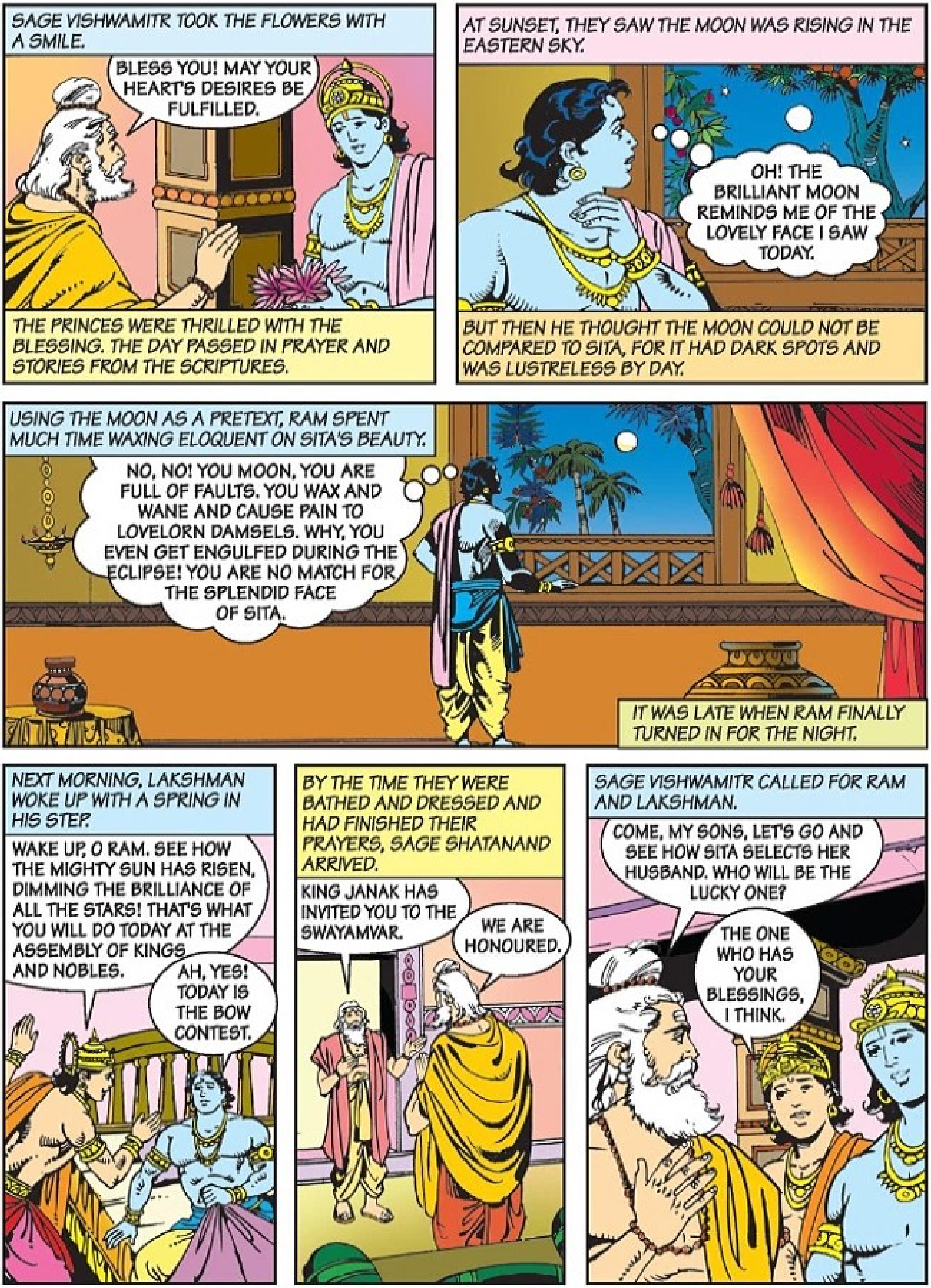

ON THE NEXT DAY, THEY ROSE AT DAWN AS SOON AS THEY HEARD THE COCK CROW.
OH! GET UP, LAKSHMAN!
KUKDOO KOO!
THEY WOKE BEFORE THE GURU, AND FINISHED THEIR MORNING ABLUTIONS AND PRAYERS.
THEY BOWED TO GURU VISHWAMITR AND ASKED HIS PERMISSION.
MAY WE GO AND GATHER FLOWERS FOR YOUR PRAYERS?
YES! DO!
IN THE GARDEN THEY SAW LOVELY BOWERS WITH CLINGING CREEPERS AND BUNCHES OF BEAUTIFUL FLOWERS.
THE SONGS OF KOELS, PARROTS AND PARTRIDGES ADDED MUSIC TO THE AIR AND GRACEFUL PEACOCKS DANCED TO THE TUNE.
IN THE MIDST OF THE GARDEN WAS A LOVELY LAKE WITH LIMPID CLEAR WATER WHERE LOTUSES BLOOMED.
HOW WONDERFUL THIS GARDEN IS.
MAY WE PLUCK SOME FLOWERS FOR OUR PUJA?
PLEASE DO SO! THERE IS SUCH AN ABUNDANCE HERE.
JUST AS THE PRINCES WERE BUSY GATHERING FRESH FLOWERS AND LEAVES, SITA CAME TO THE GARDEN. SHE WAS ON HER WAY TO THE TEMPLE OF PARVATI NEAR THE LAKE, ACCOMPANIED BY A GROUP OF GIRLS SINGING SWEETLY.
AFTER BATHING IN THE POOL, SITA AND HER COMPANIONS WENT TO THE TEMPLE.

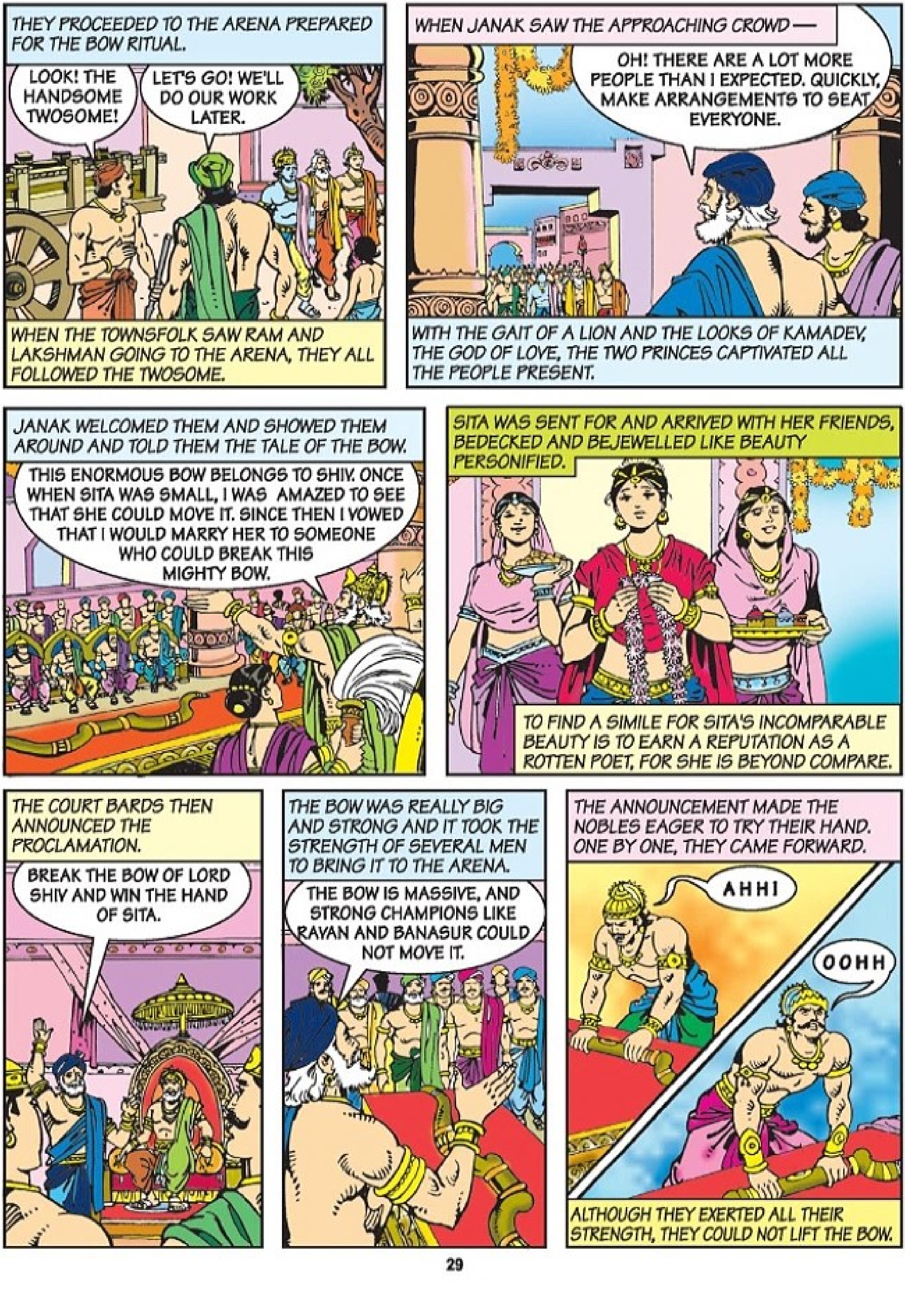


* RAM AND SITA WERE THE INCARNATIONS OF THE DIVINE COUPLE LORD VISHNU AND GODDESS LAKSHMI


MY HEART IS AGITATED AT THE VERY SIGHT OF HER. GOD KNOWS WHY! AND YOU KNOW, BROTHER, THE RIGHT SIDE OF MY BODY IS THROBBING! THAT'S SUPPOSED TO BE A GOOD OMEN, ISN'T IT?
HMM!
RAM THOUGHT ABOUT THE TRAITS OF THEIR ANCESTORS OF THE RAGHU RACE.
MEN OF OUR RACE ARE KNOWN FOR THEIR VIRTUOUS WAYS. THEY DON'T THINK EVIL OR TURN BACK IN BATTLE OR DESIRE ANOTHER MAN'S WIFE.
WHILE HE WAS SPEAKING, RAM'S EYES FOLLOWED SITA.
SITA WAS LOOKING AROUND THE GARDEN IN HER SHY TIMID WAY.
WHERE ARE THEY? I CAN'T SEE ANYONE!
LOOK THERE! BEHIND THOSE CREEPERS.
WHEN SITA AT LAST CAUGHT SIGHT OF THE PRINCES, SHE FELT ELATED.
IT IS AS IF I HAVE FOUND A LONG LOST TREASURE.
OVERCOME WITH EMOTION, SHE CLOSED HER EYELIDS, AS IF TO CAPTURE THE CAPTIVATING IMAGE IN HER MIND.
SITA'S COMPANIONS SAW HER SMITTEN CONDITION, BUT KEPT QUIET.
NO WONDER SHE'S SPEECHLESS. THE DARK-HUED ONE WITH THE LEAF CUP IN HIS HAND FILLED WITH FLOWERS, IS THE INCARNATION OF CUPID. HIS ARMS ARE STRONG AND MUSCULAR LIKE AN ELEPHANT TRUNK. HIS EYES ARE LIKE NEWLY OPENED LOTUSES.
ONE OF THE GIRLS CLASPED SITA'S HANDS AND SHOOK HER GENTLY.


SITA SHYLY LOOKED UP, GAZING COYLY AT RAM, FEET UPWARDS.
I AM BOUND BY MY FATHER'S VOW TO MARRY THE ONE WHO BREAKS THE BOW. OH, WHAT AM I TO DO NOW?
SITA'S FRIENDS REALISED SHE WAS DISTURBED.
THEY SMILED AND HINTED THEIR PLANS ALOUD.
COME ON, GIRLS! LET'S GO.
MOTHER WILL BE WORRIED ABOUT US.
WE WILL COME HERE TOMORROW AT THE SAME TIME.
SITA RETURNED TO THE TEMPLE. SHE FELL AT THE FEET OF THE IDOL OF GODDESS GAURI AND PLEADED FERVENTLY.
GLORY TO YOU, O GODDESS. YOU KNOW MY HEART'S LONGING. I NEED NOT PUT IT IN WORDS!
THE IDOL SEEMED TO SMILE AND A GARLAND FELL FROM GODDESS GAURI'S NECK ONTO SITA.
THEN SITA HEARD A DIVINE VOICE.
MY BLESSINGS ARE WITH YOU. YOUR HEART'S DESIRE WILL BE FULFILLED. THE ONE ON WHOM YOUR HEART IS SET WILL BE YOURS FOREVER.
SITA AND HER FRIENDS RETURNED JOYFULLY TO THE PALACE, REASSURED BY THE DIVINE PROCLAMATION.
MEANWHILE, RAM AND LAKSHMAN TOO RETURNED TO THEIR DWELLING PLACE.
YOU'VE BEEN AWAY LONG! DID IT TAKE YOU SO LONG TO GATHER FLOWERS?
OH! WE SAW THIS LOVELY LADY IN THE GARDEN.
AND WE WERE BEWITCHED BY HER BEAUTY. MAYBE SHE WAS JANAKI.


SAGE VISHWAMITR TOOK THE FLOWERS WITH A SMILE.
BLESS YOU! MAY YOUR HEART'S DESIRES BE FULFILLED.
THE PRINCES WERE THRILLED WITH THE BLESSING. THE DAY PASSED IN PRAYER AND STORIES FROM THE SCRIPTURES.
AT SUNSET, THEY SAW THE MOON WAS RISING IN THE EASTERN SKY.
OH! THE BRILLIANT MOON REMINDS ME OF THE LOVELY FACE I SAW TODAY.
BUT THEN HE THOUGHT THE MOON COULD NOT BE COMPARED TO SITA, FOR IT HAD DARK SPOTS AND WAS LUSTRELESS BY DAY.
USING THE MOON AS A PRETEXT, RAM SPENT MUCH TIME WAXING ELOQUENT ON SITA'S BEAUTY.
NO, NO! YOU MOON, YOU ARE FULL OF FAULTS. YOU WAX AND WANE AND CAUSE PAIN TO LOVELORN DAMSELS. WHY, YOU EVEN GET ENGULFED DURING THE ECLIPSE! YOU ARE NO MATCH FOR THE SPLENDID FACE OF SITA.
IT WAS LATE WHEN RAM FINALLY TURNED IN FOR THE NIGHT.
NEXT MORNING, LAKSHMAN WOKE UP WITH A SPRING IN HIS STEP.
WAKE UP, O RAM. SEE HOW THE MIGHTY SUN HAS RISEN, DIMMING THE BRILLIANCE OF ALL THE STARS! THAT'S WHAT YOU WILL DO TODAY AT THE ASSEMBLY OF KINGS AND NOBLES.
AH, YES! TODAY IS THE BOW CONTEST.
BY THE TIME THEY WERE BATHED AND DRESSED AND HAD FINISHED THEIR PRAYERS, SAGE SHATANAND ARRIVED.
KING JANAK HAS INVITED YOU TO THE SWAYAMVAR.
WE ARE HONOURED.
SAGE VISHWAMITR CALLED FOR RAM AND LAKSHMAN.
COME, MY SONS, LET'S GO AND SEE HOW SITA SELECTS HER HUSBAND. WHO WILL BE THE LUCKY ONE?
THE ONE WHO HAS YOUR BLESSINGS, I THINK.


THEY PROCEEDED TO THE ARENA PREPARED FOR THE BOW RITUAL.
LOOK! THE HANDSOME TWOSOME!
LET'S GO! WE'LL DO OUR WORK LATER.
WHEN THE TOWNSFOLK SAW RAM AND LAKSHMAN GOING TO THE ARENA, THEY ALL FOLLOWED THE TWOSOME.
WHEN JANAK SAW THE APPROACHING CROWD —
OH! THERE ARE A LOT MORE PEOPLE THAN I EXPECTED. QUICKLY, MAKE ARRANGEMENTS TO SEAT EVERYONE.
WITH THE GAIT OF A LION AND THE LOOKS OF KAMADEV, THE GOD OF LOVE, THE TWO PRINCES CAPTIVATED ALL THE PEOPLE PRESENT.
JANAK WELCOMED THEM AND SHOWED THEM AROUND AND TOLD THEM THE TALE OF THE BOW.
THIS ENORMOUS BOW BELONGS TO SHIV. ONCE WHEN SITA WAS SMALL, I WAS AMAZED TO SEE THAT SHE COULD MOVE IT. SINCE THEN I VOWED THAT I WOULD MARRY HER TO SOMEONE WHO COULD BREAK THIS MIGHTY BOW.
SITA WAS SENT FOR AND ARRIVED WITH HER FRIENDS, BEDECKED AND BEJEWELLED LIKE BEAUTY PERSONIFIED.
TO FIND A SIMILE FOR SITA'S INCOMPARABLE BEAUTY IS TO EARN A REPUTATION AS A ROTTEN POET, FOR SHE IS BEYOND COMPARE.
THE COURT BARDS THEN ANNOUNCED THE PROCLAMATION.
BREAK THE BOW OF LORD SHIV AND WIN THE HAND OF SITA.
THE BOW WAS REALLY BIG AND STRONG AND IT TOOK THE STRENGTH OF SEVERAL MEN TO BRING IT TO THE ARENA.
THE BOW IS MASSIVE, AND STRONG CHAMPIONS LIKE RAVAN AND BANASUR COULD NOT MOVE IT.
THE ANNOUNCEMENT MADE THE NOBLES EAGER TO TRY THEIR HAND. ONE BY ONE, THEY CAME FORWARD.
AHH!
OOHH
ALTHOUGH THEY EXERTED ALL THEIR STRENGTH, THEY COULD NOT LIFT THE BOW.


WATCHING THE PLIGHT OF THE OTHER PRINCES, SOME OF THE NOBLES DECIDED TO DESIST.
NO POINT TRYING AND MAKING A FOOL OF MYSELF. I WILL NOT GO NEAR THE BOW.
WHEN MOST OF THE PEOPLE PRESENT TRIED TO LIFT THE BOW AND FAILED TO DO SO, JANAK WAS DISTRESSED.
CONFUSED AND DISHEARTENED, THE INVITED NOBLES SAT SADLY IN THEIR PLACES.
OH NO! I HAVE INVITED KINGS FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD FOR THIS CEREMONY.
BUT ALAS! IT SEEMS GOD HAS NOT CREATED A HERO WHO MAY BREAK THE BOW AND WIN THE CONTEST. WHY, LET ALONE BREAK IT, NO ONE HAS MANAGED TO MOVE IT.
JANAK LOOKED REALLY WOEBEGONE AS HE ANNOUNCED THE CONTEST TO BE OVER.
RETURN TO YOUR HOMES FOR SITA IS DESTINED TO REMAIN UNWED. THERE IS NO HERO WORTHY OF HER AND I CANNOT BREAK MY PLEDGE.
WHILE MOST OF THE INVITEES WERE SAD AND ASHAMED AT JANAK'S WORDS, LAKSHMAN WAS FURIOUS. HIS EYEBROWS WERE KNIT, HIS LIPS TREMBLED AND HIS EYES WERE AFLAME WITH ANGER.
IN AN ASSEMBLY WHERE A SCION OF THE RAGHU CLAN IS PRESENT, NO ONE CAN MAKE SUCH A STATEMENT. WITH THE FINEST JEWEL OF THE CLAN GRACING THE ASSEMBLY, RAJA JANAK'S WORDS ARE INAPPROPRIATE INDEED.
HE TURNED TO RAM FOR PERMISSION.
IF YOU ALLOW ME TO GO AHEAD, I CAN PLUCK THE BOW LIKE A MUSHROOM. I CAN SNAP IT LIKE A LOTUS STEM!
LAKSHMAN'S WORDS PUT FEAR IN THE HEARTS OF ALL THE PEOPLE PRESENT.
BUT WITH A SWEET SMILE, RAM SIGNALLED TO HIM TO REFRAIN AND MADE HIM SIT DOWN.
ARISE RAM, BREAK THE BOW OF SHIV. RELIEVE JANAK OF HIS WORRIES, MY BOY.
WITH YOUR BLESSINGS, SIR.
SWAYING LIKE AN ELEPHANT, RAM ROSE TO TRY HIS MIGHT.
SITA'S MOTHER WAS NOW FILLED WITH ANXIETY.
OH, NO! STOP HIM SOMEONE! HE IS BUT A CHILD. HOW CAN THEY GIVE HIM THE BOW THAT BAFFLED BRAVE MEN. IT'S NOT CHILD'S PLAY.
DON'T BE DECEIVED BY SIZE, O QUEEN! THE SUN APPEARS SMALL BUT DISPELS DARKNESS IN ALL THE THREE WORLDS.


MEANWHILE, SITA WAS PRAYING HARD.
PLEASE! MOTHER GODDESS! MAKE THE BOW LIGHT. PLEASE, PLEASE.
RAM GLANCED AT SITA AND THEN POUNCED ON THE BOW AS THE EAGLE POUNCES ON ITS PREY.
AS SOON AS HE PICKED IT UP, AFTER BOWING TO HIS GURU IN HIS MIND, THE BOW FLASHED LIKE LIGHTNING IN THE SKY.
HE GRASPED THE STRING AND DREW IT TIGHT. THEN HE BROKE THE BOW INTO TWO HALVES.
THE SOUND RESOUNDED THROUGH THE EARTH AND THE SKIES.
RAM HAS BROKEN THE BOW!
SHOUTS OF VICTORY FILLED THE SKIES. SITA'S FACE WAS LIT WITH JOY AND LAKSHMAN'S WITH PRIDE.
ON A SIGNAL FROM SAGE SHATANAND, SITA ADVANCED TOWARDS RAM, FOLLOWED BY HER FRIENDS WHO SANG AUSPICIOUS SONGS. SHE WAS STUNNED BY RAM'S GOOD LOOKS. HER COMPANION NUDGED HER.
PUT THE GARLAND OF VICTORY AROUND HIM.
JAY ! JAY !
SITA PUT THE GARLAND AROUND RAM'S NECK.
THE DIVINE PAIR, RAM AND SITA, STOOD SIDE BY SIDE LIKE BEAUTY AND GRACE PERSONIFIED.
THE AIR WAS FILLED WITH HAPPINESS AND THERE WAS JOY ALL AROUND. AT LAST, A WORTHY SUITOR HAD BEEN FOUND FOR THE LOVELY SITA.

राम कीन्ह चाहहिं सोइ होई
करै अन्यथा असं नहि कोई

The Will of Shri Ram alone prevails,
There is no one else who can alter it.

